

6th Transportation Battalion (Truck)



**6th Transportation Battalion Crest (l) and coat of arms (r)
mouse over each for a description**

World War II

The battalion was constituted on 17 June 1943 as the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment (HHD), 6th Quartermaster Troop Transport Battalion. The battalion was activated on 26 August 1943 at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. It was reorganized and redesignated as the HHD, 6th Quartermaster Battalion (Mobile) on 20 November 1943. The battalion deployed to Europe on where it supported the drive from Northern France, through the Rhineland and into Central Europe .

On 30 March 1945, the battalion was attached to the 12th Army Group and stationed at Diedrich, Germany. On 14 June 1945, the 6th Battalion was attached to the 550th Quartermaster Group for all administration and operations. On the following day the battalion was relieved from assignment to the 9th US Army and assigned to the 7th US Army. During this period the battalion was located in Ledeban Kaserne, on the outskirts of Hildersheim, Germany. At this time, the battalion had six operating units under its command.

On 2 July 1945, the battalion departed Hildersheim and went to Wahern, Germany. There the battalion continued its mission of supporting Class I and III supply points in addition to all bakery units within the area. On 8 July the battalion was attached to the 56th Quartermaster Base Depot for administration and operations. The 6th Battalion was attached to the 56th Quartermaster Base Depot on 8 July 1945.

Army of Occupation

The Battalion moved again on 11 August 1945 to Hersfeld, Germany, but the main operations for the Battalion took place in Kassel where the battalion established a forward base to service the units within the area. At Kassel the battalion commanded twelve operational units.

During 1945, the following companies were attached to the battalion for operations:

3011th Quartermaster Bakery Company

3013th Quartermaster Bakery Company
 3035th Quartermaster Bakery Company
 3038th Quartermaster Bakery Company
 348th Quartermaster Depot Company
 195th Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company
 197th Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company
 832nd Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company
 842nd Quartermaster Gasoline Supply Company
 607th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company
 608th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company
 579th Quartermaster Laundry Company
 87th Quartermaster Railhead Company
 93rd Quartermaster Railhead Company
 552nd Quartermaster Railhead Company
 554th Quartermaster Railhead Company
 231st Quartermaster Salvage Collecting Company
 233rd Quartermaster Salvage Collecting Company
 540th Quartermaster Salvage Repair Company
 978th Quartermaster Service Company
 1191st Quartermaster Service Company
 3104th Quartermaster Service Company
 3130th Quartermaster Service Company
 3168th Quartermaster Service Company
 3170th Quartermaster Service Company
 3195th Quartermaster Service Company
 3216th Quartermaster Service Company
 3217th Quartermaster Service Company
 3218th Quartermaster Service Company
 3230th Quartermaster Service Company
 3279th Quartermaster Service Company
 4093rd Quartermaster Service Company
 4183rd Quartermaster Service Company
 4185th Quartermaster Service Company
 4191st Quartermaster Service Company
 8015th Quartermaster Service Company
 8027th Quartermaster Service Company

During the next eight months, the battalion was gradually relieved of its motley Quartermaster units. Many of the companies were inactivated or returned to the US, which kept the battalion in a constant state of flux. During one quarter, the battalion was headquarters for 25 separate Quartermaster units. By April 1946 when the battalion came under the command of the 3rd Army, it had a homogeneous command of 14 Quartermaster Truck companies, 11 of which were in the Mannheim area. Seven of these were provisional units manned by Polish personnel with one American officer and four enlisted men to supervise operations.

In addition to the above units, the battalion had one unit in Darmstadt supplying the community with necessary commodities, and another unit at Hanau supporting the transportation needs for the Hanau Air Depot. The remaining units were in Asperg and driver and maintenance personnel were drawn from a waiting list of German civilians. This unit supported the transportation needs of the entire Ludwigsburg area. The major problem encountered during this period was maintenance of combat worn vehicles and the shortage of qualified officers and enlisted. In June 1946, the battalion was placed under the Continental Base Section, however, the headquarters remained in Mannheim. From July to September 1946, the mission of the battalion became the restoration of combat worn vehicles and the transport of supplies and equipment varied within the different areas. On 1 August 1946, the battalion was converted and redesignated as the HHD, 6th Transportation Corps Truck Battalion. Quartermaster truck units were given to the Transportation Corps following World War II.

In the latter part of October 1946, there was a critical shortage of food in the German consumer markets, which was aggravated by the fact that the German transportation infrastructure at the time was inadequate to transport recently harvested produce from the farms to the cities. A request for additional vehicles for the transportation of this produce was approved and a program was drafted and immediately put into effect. The original plan was conceived as a program to aid the ill-conditioned and insufficient number of commercial German trucks in hauling the autumn harvest to market. However, due to the lack of heating fuel, a need especially acute in the cities, the initial plan was altered to include the movement of fuels. The need for this fuel had become so imperative that if this movement were not put into effect as expeditiously as possible, coal shipments from the United States would not have been forwarded directly. Operation SPUD called for local community commanders to assemble the hauling requirements for the area under their jurisdiction.

LTC S. G. Lefner, commander of the 6th Transportation Battalion, immediately set his forces into action by sending half of his operative companies into the Pforzheim, Goppingen, and Karlsruhe areas and the remainder proceeded full time operations. The cargo hauled included potatoes, firewood, grain and several other foodstuffs. During the operation several difficulties arose. Foremost among these was the hardfelt manpower shortage which increased under the stresses of a major operation. The vacancies, due mainly to the rapid redeployment of military personnel, were filled for the most part of German civilians drivers. As these drivers were, in general, poorly trained and lacked the necessary experience, their knowledge of vehicle maintenance was limited. An operational slowdown was the inevitable outcome of this policy of civilian vehicle driving. Also, many vehicles were still combat worn, had not yet been replaced and had only undergone the most urgent repairs. Nevertheless, approximately 189,826 tons of supplies were carried and a total of 1,583,900 miles were driven during these three months of the operation.

This assistance furnished transportation for all critical farm products and sufficient fuels to enable the German agencies to provide for their needs before the winter had set in. The 6th Battalion, as did many other transportation organizations completed its mission with the great success and Operations SPUD ended on 31 December 1946.

As a credit to this battalion and to the other units which participated in the operation, which was of such great assistance to the German economy, the following words from the Bamberg

Newspaper, *Fraenkisher Tag*, may be quoted with pride: “In order to comprehend the generosity with which the victors are treating us one should ask oneself if the German in Poland would have placed trucks at the disposal of the Polish population to save the harvest.” This is both a compliment to our American way of life and to the drivers who toiled the many hours, carrying their cargo to the centers of need.

On 22 April 1947, the Battalion was redesignated the HHD, 6th Transportation Truck Battalion and participated in the Berlin Airlift. Prior to the end of World War II, the Allies had agreed to divide the responsibility for occupation of Germany among them. Similarly, the German capitol of Berlin, which was in Soviet sector, was divided by the occupying powers. On 30 November 1945, the Allied Control Council officially approved in writing an air corridor between the western zone and Berlin. In 1948, Russia decided to roll its occupied countries into the Soviet Union. The first challenge after the war came when the Soviet Union closed off freight traffic of its former Allies into Berlin hoping that they would turn their portion of the capitol over. The blockade of Berlin was imposed by the Russians on 21 June 1948. The US Army and Air Force responded by delivering supplies to Berlin through the air corridor. Operation Vittles had its airborne birth on 26 June 1948. Rhein-Main and Wiesbaden became the Airports of Embarkation (APOE) with TC Airhead Tempelhof in Berlin the Airport of Debarkation (APOD). The 67th Transportation Truck Company and the 6th Transportation Battalion hauled the cargo to the Air Port of Embarkation at Rhein-Main Air Base. The 2nd Traffic Control Group opened another APOE at Wiesbaden Air Base on 29 June. The airlift delivered an average of 8,000 tons per day. 4 May 1949, Western Allies and the Soviet Union agreed to lift the blockade. The Allies continued airlift for three more months to build up reserve stocks. The US Army proved that it could support a massive operation by air.

The 6th Battalion remained in Germany until its inactivation on 19 January 1949, and the 28th Transportation Battalion was activated the next day. On 29 January 1949, its colors were returned to the United States.

Cold War

In 1949, Russia detonated its first atomic bomb and the Communist Chinese drove the Nationalist Chinese from the mainland onto the island of Formosa. The Soviet Union formed out of the buffer states that Russia kept after World War II. This created the Iron curtain and the United States and the rest of Europe formed the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO). These acts divided the world into a conflict between the communist governments and democratic governments. The super powers avoid direct conflict but instead fought each other indirectly in a series of conflicts in Third World countries. This face-off between the superpowers was known as the Cold War. This threat required the United States to maintain a large standing army during a time of relative peace.

Fort Eustis, Virginia

The 6th Battalion was redesignated as the Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 6th Transportation Truck Battalion on 16 July 1952 and allotted to the Regular Army. It was reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 15 August 1952 then redesignated as HHC, 6th Transportation Battalion on 31 October 1952. On 15 August 1952, HHC, 48th Transportation Highway Group was also activated at Fort Eustis and provided command and control for the 4th,

6th and 126th Transportation Truck Battalions and the 502nd Traffic Regulating Group. The 48th Transportation Group (Truck) supported the Transportation Training Command. From November 1952 until August 1956, the 6th Battalion supported various training missions of the Transportation Training Command.

On 25 September 1953, the 6th Battalion fell under the 48th Transportation Group and another reorganization took place. The 6th Battalion assumed responsibility for the following:

15th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

16th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

61st Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Petroleum Tanker)

557th Transportation Company (Heavy Truck) (Heavy Lift)

The 61st and 557th Truck Companies participated in Support Northeastern Command (SUNEC) '53. Several of the battalion's companies continued to take part in SUNEC operations during 1954, 1955 and 1956. SUNEC was an annual Logistics-over-the-shore (LOTS) operation to deliver supplies to the US Air Force stations in Thule, Greenland every spring and summer in support of the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line along the Arctic Circle. This was the shortest distance between the United States and Russian and the most likely avenue of attack by Soviet bombers and later missiles.

The 6th Battalion and the 502nd Traffic Regulating Group participated in Operation FLASHBURN at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, from April to June 1954. The truck battalion logged 120,885 miles, transporting 11,402 tons and 8,028 passengers.

With the end of the Korean War, the 126th Battalion prepared for release from active duty and in 1954. This caused a reshuffling of truck units on Fort Eustis over the next two years. The 126th Battalion transferred its 165th Truck Company to the 6th Battalion in 1954. Then on 24 February 1955, the 17th and 19th Transportation Companies were transferred to the 6th Battalion from the newly activated 522nd Battalion. The 16th Light Truck Company was attached to the 522nd Battalion on July. The 522nd Battalion was activated from the personnel and equipment left by the 126th Battalion when it was released from active duty on 9 February. The two companies participated in SUNEC that year. The 165th Truck Company was then released from active duty later that year. The 5th and 597th Medium Truck Companies were attached to the 6th Battalion in 1955. The 126th Transportation Company was organized from the active duty personnel and equipment that were left over from the 652nd Truck Company after it was released from active duty on 10 March. It was also attached to the 6th Battalion. The 15th Transportation Company was transferred to the 4th Transportation Battalion for GYROSCOPE to Germany in 1956.

By 1956, the 6th Battalion contained of the following units:

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment

5th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

17th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

19th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Refrigeration)

32nd Transportation Company

61st Transportation Company

126th Transportation Company (Truck)

597th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

Germany

In August 1956, the 6th Battalion was designated as a “Gyroscope” unit. The battalion then conducted an eight week training program, six weeks of which were spent on field problems at Camp A. P. Hill, Virginia. On 11 March 1957, the battalion left the United States and arrived at Panzer Kaserne, Boeblingen, Germany, on 21 March 1957, for a two-year unit rotation. It replaced the 29th Transportation Battalion (Truck), which returned to the United States. It picked up the 62nd Medium Truck Company was attached to the 10th Transportation Highway Group. In Germany, the 6th Battalion formed part of the line of communication that stretched from the ports of Northern France to US combat divisions in Germany.

During the Cold War, US Army Europe established its line of communication back to the ports of Northern France. The 37th Transportation Highway Group had responsibility for the first leg of the line haul. It handed off cargo to the 10th Group which then delivered to the garrisons and units in the field.

The 62nd Medium Truck Company was relieved by the 126th Medium Truck as part of Operation GYROSCOPE and rotated back to Fort Eustis in March 1957.

After the settling in period, the 6th Battalion looked to a busy year. In July, the Battalion hosted the 7th Army Special Troops Drivers Proficiency Contest and participated in a farewell ceremony for COL Carol K. Maffout prior to his departure for 7th Army. The Battalion again played host to the 7th Army Support Command Driver Proficiency Contest in September in July 1958. On 20 February 1959, the 6th Battalion was redesignated as the HHD, 6th Transportation Battalion. The 6th Transportation Battalion “Gyroscoped” back to Fort Eustis, Virginia, in April 1959 and was the last battalion to do so from Europe.

Fort Eustis Again

The 6th Battalion fell under the 48th Transportation Group once again with the following companies:

88th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

61st Transportation Company (Medium Truck) (Petroleum)

62nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck)

The 6th Transportation Battalion participated in the Joint Army-Marine Corps Landing Exercise (JAMLEX) from 25 October to 7 November 1960. It had control of the 329th Heavy Boat Company, 1097th and 1098th Medium Boat Companies, 461st Amphibious Truck Company, 854th Terminal Service Company and the 554th BARC Platoon, 151st Light Truck and 598th Medium Truck Companies, 65th Light Helicopter Company and the 18th Aviation Maintenance Detachment. The operation tested the “through the beach” concept to support the 1,500 man Marine landing team at Camp Lejuene, North Carolina. The operation was conducted in four phases with the DUKWs and landing craft discharging troops, tanks, artillery and supplies on the beach to establish a foothold. The BARCs established a ferry across the inland waterway. The second phase concentrated on the logistical support of combat forces even utilizing helicopters for emergency resupply and medical evacuation. During the second phase the amphibians and

landing craft moved troops and supplies across the New River. During phase four helicopters lifted a battalion of Marines to Camp Davis and Bogue Field for further maneuvers.

The 62nd Medium Truck Company was again transferred overseas. This time it deployed to France in October 1961, where it was attached to the 106th Battalion.

In July 1962, the 10th Transportation Company, 27th Battalion and 62nd Transportation Company, 6th Battalion returned from two and a half years on the road. In June 1958, the companies were assigned to the US Army Transportation Corps Road Test Support Activity at Ottawa, Illinois. The companies had departed in September and the ribbon cutting ceremony for the science of highway durability test of pavements and bridges was conducted in October. The \$22,000,000 project was a proving grounds for the 40,000 mile interstate and defense highway system administered by the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHO). Four hundred drivers drove in three arrangements of two shifts around the clock, rotating every two weeks. They drove loaded commercial trucks from ¼-ton to 5-ton diesels, summer and winter, over six highway loops of various thicknesses of concrete and asphalt. They drove over 17 million miles.

A section of the 6th Battalion headquarters and the 151st Transportation Company deployed to Europe to support the Berlin Crisis logistics effort; the elements returned in August 1962. During 1962, the 6th Battalion participated in Operation GREAT BEAR in Alaska and Exercise SAND DUNE at Fort Story.

On 22 August 1962, the 62nd Medium Truck Company disembarked at Hampton Roads from Germany and was attached to the 27th Battalion only for a short time that year then it was attached to the 6th Battalion.

Cuban Missile Crisis

In September 1962, the Soviet Union shipped nuclear missiles to Cuba. President John F. Kennedy responded by a naval blockade of the island and threat of an invasion. In October, the 6th Truck and the 159th Boat Battalions were mobilized for the Cuban Crisis. The 6th Battalion received orders to load the equipment of the 88th Light Truck, 61st Medium Truck, and 62nd Medium Truck Companies on flat cars to Florida. On 2 November, they departed and became operational on 10 November. From then the 6th Battalion waited with the landing craft of the 159th Boat Battalion for the impending amphibious invasion of the Communist Island. Cuba and the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw the missiles, but the 6th Battalion remained in Florida until December until the danger abated. The 6th Battalion returned to Fort Eustis by a four-day motor convoy, arriving on 8 December.

In the last week of March 1963, the 62nd Medium Truck Company was assigned the mission of Headquarters Company (Provisional) to support the Joint Task Force (JTF) 4 Headquarters. In June, the 62nd Medium Truck participated in Exercise BIG STEP II at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. In October and November 1963, the battalion participated in Operation BIG LIFT and the headquarters airlifted to Ramstein Air Base in Germany on 22 October 1963 where it moved to Lorsch Woods outside Viernheim. The battalion received many commendations for outstanding work during BIG LIFT including a letter from the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Vietnam War

In 1962, communist insurgents launched a guerrilla war to usurp the unification elections in the Republic of South Vietnam. The United States then sent advisors and helicopter companies to South Vietnam to stabilize the government. In 1965, it became clear that South Vietnam would fall without greater assistance from the United States. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, (MACV) called for an increase in the number of US troops to serve in the combat role against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army. The 6th Battalion deployed to Vietnam during the second buildup in 1966.

In April 1966, LTC Oren E. De Haven assumed command of the 6th Battalion, known as "The Doers." The majority of the personnel joined the headquarters on 1 June and two days later the battalion moved to Fort Pickett, Virginia for a five-day field training exercise. The battalion headquarters with 38 personnel departed Fort Eustis on 23 July 1966 and boarded the *USS Pope* at Tacoma, Washington. The advance party flew to Tan Son Nhut, Vietnam on 4 August and the main body arrived at Cam Ranh Bay on 12 August and Long Binh the next. The 120th Transportation Company was initially the only unit attached to the battalion. The 120th was the first truck company to arrive in Vietnam on 25 June 1965. One platoon was on temporary duty to Vung Tau and operated independent of the battalion. The 6th and the 7th Transportation Battalion were attached to the 48th Transportation Group. The 6th Battalion operated 2 ½ and 5-ton trucks while 7th Battalion operated M52 trucks with S&P trailers. The 6th Battalion was also given the responsibility for administration and control of the Contracting Officer's Representative for the Equipment, Incorporated, a subsidiary of Sea Land Service, Incorporated, which operated 440 commercial trucks to move cargo from the Port of Saigon.

The 6th Battalion assumed control of the 86th, 120th and 151st Light Truck Companies 14 days after its arrival. The 86th had just arrived on 12 August 1966 while the 120th and 151st had both arrived the previous summer. HHD, 6th Battalion had responsibility to receive, house, orient and employ the attached truck companies. The 87th, 261st, and 543rd Light Truck Companies arrived in early October. All the companies had 2 ½-ton trucks except the 261st, which had 5-tons with 1 ½-ton trailers.

The 87th Light Truck, under CPT David S. Robins, had been stationed at Fort Lewis and was alerted for deployment to overseas to a classified destination on 25 March 1966. The company was filled mostly with draftees right out of basic training centers across the United States and the officers and NCOs of the company provided their Advanced Individual Training (AIT). From June, the company prepared for overseas movement and conducted training in weapons, tactics, Chemical,-Biological-Radiation (CBR) and driving. The company completed and passed its Operational Readiness Test (ORT) from 25 to 30 August and then the officers ensured all the men had and packed their complete issue of clothing and equipment. On 7 September, the 87th boarded the *USNS General John Pope* with 66 brand new Multi-fuel M35A2 2 ½-ton trucks and five M151A2 ¼-ton Mutts with fairly new AN/VRC-46 radios. The boat stopped briefly at Okinawa and Subic Bay, Philippines and arrived at Qui Nhon, Vietnam on 1 October. The next day, the 87th landed on a beach at Nha Trang but had to reboard four hours later due to a change

in orders. The company arrived at Vung Tau on 3 October and flew to Bien Hoa Air Force Base for travel to its final TC Hill.¹

Within 60 days of its arrival, the 6th Battalion had six truck companies attached to it:

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
86th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
87th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
120th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
151st Transportation Company (Light Truck)
261st Transportation Company (Light Truck)
543rd Transportation Company (Light Truck)

Upon arrival HHD, 6th Battalion was attached to the 48th Group and moved into tents. The group commander gave DeHaven control of the southwest corner of Long Binh, known as “TC Hill.” He said, “That’s yours to do with what you want.” DeHaven visited to his old boss, Major General Frank Miller, who was then the Chief of Staff of US Army Vietnam (USARV). Through this connection, DeHaven’s Logistics Officer, CPT Harold Rodd, went before the Planning Board at Long Binh and received priority in getting the pre-fabricated Butler buildings. The battalion would construct an eight company-size battalion area. The catch was that the men had to construct the buildings themselves. DeHaven asked every man to volunteer at least one hour of his free time to this project. They found a cement mixer left by the French and a mechanic by the name of Paul Rodds hooked it up to a diesel engine to get it to work and painted the drum yellow. Since Paul worked for CPT Rodds, the men of the battalion called the contraption, “Rodds’ Rolls Royce.” They laid the concrete foundations then erected the buildings. By the time DeHaven left in August 1967, they had completed five of the company areas, the battalion headquarters, mess hall, bachelor officers quarters, supply facility and recreation area.

The 6th Battalion as part of the 48th Group supported American units in the III (entire zone) and IV (limited) Corps Tactical Zones and conducted the only major sustained convoy operations in areas that had long been disrupted by the Viet Cong. The two battalions conducted port clearance in the Saigon area, which included the commercial port of Saigon and military ports of Vung Tau and Newport, the latter adjacent to Long Binh. The 163rd Transportation Company (Light Truck) was assigned to the 6th Battalion in 1965 at Chu Lai. In port clearance operations, the 6th Battalion cleared all types of general cargo from the main port of Saigon to the US port facility at Newport and Vung Tau, provided priority support to the Air Cargo Section of the 8th Aerial Port at Tan Son Nhut Airbase, and transported all classes of ammunition from barge discharge sites to ammunition storage areas at Long-Binh, Tan Son Nhut Air Base and Bien Hoa Air Base. Most of the short haul runs took only a few hours to reach their destinations. The trucks drove on modern highways and hastily improved jungle roads.

The initial mission of the 6th Battalion was to move arriving personnel and equipment of major combat units from their debarkation points to the base camp areas. During the troop buildup, the battalion moved every major combat unit arriving in the III Corps area. The first unit the battalion transported was the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, which had arrived in country in

¹ CPT Frank N. Mancuso, “Annual Historical Summary, 87th Transportation Company (Light Truck), 1 January 1966 to 31 December 1966,” nd.

September, a month after the 6th Battalion headquarters had arrived. The battalion transported the 3,539 personnel and 8,039 tons of equipment from the air head to its base camp at Bien Hoa.

In October, the 3rd Brigade of the 4th Infantry Division (ID) arrived by ship at Vung Tau. During Operation ROBIN, the battalion moved 3,126 personnel and 1,887 tons of cargo from Vung Tau along the previously unsecured Route 15 to its base camp at Dau Tieng.

Soon after the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division had arrived, it entered combat in War Zone C in the Tay Ninh Province. During Operation ATTLEBORO, from 14 September to 24 November 1966, the 6th Battalion convoys delivered supplies from depots to the 1st and 4th Infantry Divisions and 173rd Airborne Brigade in the field, often delivering ammunition and much needed supplies right up to forward positions. The unimproved roads were either relatively or completely unsecure. Vehicles were loaded at night and moved to secure assembly areas. There they picked up escorts of either armored personnel carriers or gun jeeps and air cover. Convoys consisted of 300 vehicles. PFC Dennis R. Lehman and PFC William E. Kennedy were killed in an ambush on 21 November 1966. Since many of the truck companies still had not arrived, a critical shortage of trucks arose during this operation. The 6th Battalion received the mission to organize, command and control a provisional truck company made up of 100 trucks and personnel drawn from all USARV commands. The battalion organized, billeted and placed the company into operation in less than 12 hours. The battalion delivered over 6,500 tons of critical supplies during this operation.

In order to speed the flow of critical war supplies and certain categories of US AID cargo through the congested port of Saigon, two contracts were negotiated with a US firm to furnish commercial design trucks for port clearance work in mid-1966. When the 6th Battalion became operational, it received the mission of staffing and operating the Office of Contracting Office's Representative (COR) for the first two contracts. It also received the similar mission with the third contract, which was signed with another firm in the fall of 1966. The supervision of these contracts and attached military units gave the 6th Battalion operational control of 1,000 trucks. The contractor's standards of performance and maintenance were initially low.

The Viet Cong guerrillas attacked the contractors' motor pool facility on 13 September 1966 killing five men and destroying 37 trucks. Following that attack the 6th Battalion received the mission to provide security for the Equipment Incorporated and Philco-Ford motor pools near Thu Doc, which was halfway between Long Binh and Saigon. On 10 October 1966, the Viet Cong returned in force. The 6th Battalion fought off an attack killing a minimum of 21 Viet Cong and did not lose a single vehicle in the attack. In spite of the frequent interruptions of service due to strikes, Viet Cong activity and other causes, the battalion still provided a contract vehicle service which constituted over 75 percent of the war cargo moved through the vital port of Saigon.

On 5 November 1966, CPT Frank N. Mancuso assumed command of the 87th Light Truck Company. On 21 November, an 80-plus convoy of the 6th Battalion was ambushed near Ap Hung Nghia on its way to Xuan Hoa.

The next unit, the 199th Light Infantry Brigade, arrived on 10 December. During Operation CANARY, the 6th Battalion transported 2,215 men and 1,629 tons of cargo along the same Route 15 to Song Be without an accident or incident. It received the praise of the brigade personnel.

The Headquarters and Headquarters Company and 3rd Brigade, 9th Infantry Division arrived next on 16 December followed by the Division Support Command and Division Artillery on 19 December, 1st Brigade on 3 January 1967 and 2nd Brigade on 28 January. During Operation DUCK, the 6th Battalion moved the entire division to its destination. This was the largest move of the 6th Battalion with brigade destinations to Bear Cat, Tan An and Dong Tam. The battalion continued to resupply the division until it became operational.

On 10 January 1967, a 30-man security platoon was attached to the 543rd Transportation Company to provide security for the Philco-Ford motor pool at Thu Doc when it was completed.

The 6th Battalion also provided support for Operation CEDAR FALLS, 8 to 26 January 1967. The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions along with Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) battalions conducted the offensive operations against Viet Cong Region 4 Headquarters in the “Iron Triangle.” Notable in this operation was the use of battalion vehicles in support of efforts to relocate refugees. The convoys relocated 1,112 refugees, their belongings and livestock from the “Iron Triangle” while the battalion was still heavily committed with beach and port clearance.

The 6th Battalion supported the same units during Operation JUNCTION CITY, from 22 February to March 1967. In order to increase the number of available medium trucks for this operation and the upcoming CEDAR FALLS, the 6th Battalion was given responsibility for security of TC Hill Base Camp, which allowed it to have one company stand down each day. The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, 1st and 25th Infantry Divisions along with four ARVN battalions formed a horseshoe position to trap Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) regulars in War Zone C. The 173rd made the only American combat jump during the war to block the escape route across the Cambodian border.

In February, 48th Group required one truck company to provide security for TC Hill instead of a composite guard. This allowed one company to stand down to accomplish nearly all of its quarterly training requirements during this one week period.

On 16 March 1967, the 48th Transportation Group assumed the responsibility for supervision of the contract vehicle operations so the 6th Battalion could focus on command and control of attached truck companies. The battalion, however, maintained responsibility for the security of the Equipment Incorporated and Philco-Ford motor pools in Thu Doc and stationed the entire 543rd Transportation Company there. They constructed bunkers and erected guard towers around the two sites separated by 150 meters.

On 9 April 1967, the 163rd Transportation Company was attached to Task Force Oregon up north in I Corps Tactical Zone. The task force consisted of the 196th infantry Brigade and the 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. This task force would later become the Americal Division and

the 163rd Transportation Company would become its organic Supply and Transportation Company.

In March the battalion also began running convoys of no more than 20 vehicles along Highway 4 to the 9th Infantry Division at Tan An and Dong Tam in the Mekong Delta.

The dangerous road to Tay Ninh was opened in the summer of 1966. A platoon of tanks guarded dangerous points along the way while a company of armored personnel carriers, Vietnamese Skyhawk fighters and UH1B Huey gunships escorted the convoys. In the fall of 1967,

The 6th Battalion also supported Operation SENACA FALLS. From 18 August 1966 to 31 May 1967, the battalion moved over 413,468 tons of cargo and over 241,032 passengers driving 4,621,736 miles with an accident rate of .62 per 100,000 miles while the US Army Pacific average was 1.18 recordable accidents per 100,000 miles. The battalion received its first Meritorious Unit Commendation for the period from August 1966 to March 1967. From 22 December 1966 to 4 February 1967, the Battalion drove 1,047,000 miles without accidents. On 8 April 1967, the battalion received recognition for driving 1,000,000 accident free miles. Every available truck drove seven days a week, day and night. Deadline rate for task vehicles was reduced from a high of 23 percent in September 1966 to 2 percent in May 1967 with an average rate of 6 percent. DeHaven could boast that he had 45 vehicles on the road on any given day while other areas at best put 30 trucks on the road.

In August 1967, LTC Clinton K. Jones assumed command of the 6th Battalion. DeHaven would go on to retire as a major general. The 87th Transportation Company moved a company-sized unit of Cambodian mercenaries from Bien Hoa to Long Hai on 18 August. The advance party of the 363rd Transportation Company arrived from Fort Riley, Kansas on 22 August and the main body arrived on 2 September. The company became operational on 27 September. The 163rd Light Truck was dropped from the battalion on 8 December 1967. The 321st Medium Truck Company took its place when it arrived from Fort Meade, Maryland, on 26 December 1967.

On 2 September 1967, a returning convoy out of Peliku in the Central Highlands was ambushed by a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) company destroying 27 trucks and killing or wounding as many drivers. Up until that time ambushes had only destroyed individual trucks. From that time on, the enemy focused on shutting down the life line of the combat units especially the helicopter units by ambushing entire convoys. The 8th Transportation Group's solution was gun trucks.

On 14 September 1967, the 48th Group in conjunction with the 9th Infantry Division Service and Transportation Battalion needed to send light, fast, armored convoys to run the dangerous road from Bearcat to Dong Tam. MAJ Larry Ondic had pedestal mounts for M-60 machineguns and steel plating put on five M-35 2 ½-ton trucks of the 151st Transportation Company for a night convoy to move elements of the 9th Infantry Division. The convoy ran to Dong Tam without incident but was ambushed on its way back near Ben Luc. The gun trucks quickly suppressed the ambush and continued without further incident. The commander of the 9th Division loved the hardened concept and the 48th Group began running routine night convoys to Dong Tam and Xuan Loc. On 17 September, GEN Creighton Abrams, Deputy Commander, MACV, and LTG Bruce H. Palmer, Deputy Commander of USARV, visited the 6th Battalion to see the gun trucks.

On 8 March 1968, the battalion would show off these gun trucks to GEN Frank S. Besson, Commander of the Army Materiel Command, and later received four M2.50 caliber machineguns. This, however, was a onetime experiment with gun trucks as the 48th Group would not build dedicated gun trucks for several years.²

From 3-18 December, the 6th Battalion moved the 101st Airborne Division from Bien Hoa to Phouc Vinh and Chu Chi. This move required 100 trucks per day to haul approximately 4,200 troops and 2,000 short tons of cargo. The battalion also began running convoys to Katum in December. The trip required three days to complete.

The 352nd Transportation Company from Fort Carson, Colorado arrived in Vietnam on 8 January 1968 and was attached to the 6th Battalion. On 10 February, the 363rd Transportation Company was sent north to I Corps Tactical Zone where it would be attached to the 57th Transportation Battalion on 18 February.

During 1968 and 1969, the battalion performed daily line haul operations from Long Binh to Tui Hoa, Phong Loi, and Phuc Bien. In 1969, the 6th Battalion was comprised of the following companies:

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment

86th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

87th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

120th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

151st Transportation Company (Light Truck)

261st Transportation Company (Light Truck)

321st Transportation Company (Light Truck)

352nd Transportation Company (Light Truck)

379th Transportation Company (Medium Reefer Truck Company)

The 319th and 352nd Light Truck Companies arrived in January and September 1968. The 379th Medium Reefer Truck Company operated under the battalion starting in November 1968. The 87th and 151st left in March 1969.

During this time, convoys quit running at night outside the cantonment area. Only trucks ran from the Newport pier to the ammunition supply point (ASP) at night. There was always more cargo to move than trucks to move it.

The 6th Battalion worked in support of the new port clearance operation at Cam Rahn Bay and the port of Saigon. In long haul operations, the battalion supported the III and IV Corps zones. During this time the battalion converted four companies into stake and platform (S&P) units. Medium 5-ton trucks with a dolly were used to pull the S&P trailer, which came to be known the “monster.” Only the best drivers were put on these trucks. The trucks carried bulky commodities, like napalm and the accident rate on these shipments was almost non-existent. The battalion also supported the movement of Class V (ammunition) shipments. The 6th Battalion hauled ammo

² Larry Ondic conversation with Richard Killblane; and “In Vietnam the Truck is Still King,” *Hi-Lite*, Feb 1968; Subject: Monthly Operational Summary, Department of the Army, Headquarters, 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck), 5 October 1967; and Subject: Monthly Operational Summary, Department of the Army, Headquarters, 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck), 6 December 1967.

shipments from the truck barge transfer points to the depot. When ammo was ordered the 6th Battalion would then haul it north to combat areas.

The first large scale ambush in the 48th Group occurred on 25 August 1968. It was a typical monsoon season day. The clouds were low, visibility was poor, and intermittent rain drenched the area. The large resupply convoy of 81 trucks of the 48th Transportation Group assembled at Long Binh. The convoy assembled with reefer trucks in the front, followed by supply trucks, and fuel and ammo trucks in the rear. If a fuel or ammo truck were disabled it would not stop the entire convoy—the rest of the convoy could speed out of the hostile area. Convoys resupplied the camp of the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Divisions, daily at Tay Ninh located just seven miles from the Cambodian border in Tay Ninh Province. The famed Ho Chi Minh trail ran near the Tay Ninh province. The convoy normally took a few hours to complete, because the mandated convoy speed limit of 20 miles per hour.

The convoy of 81 trucks proceeded on Main Supply Route (MSR) 1 from Saigon through the village Hoc Mon, west past the 25th ID base camp at Cu Chi, through the village of Trang Bang, across the bridge at Soui Cao Creek (also called Soui-Cide bridge, because of a large number of ambushes that occurred there) on to Go Dau Ha at the intersection of MSR 1 and MSR 22. The convoy next turned northwest onto MSR 22 through the village of Ap Nhi—about 4.5 miles northwest of the Go Dau Ha intersection. The convoy would end after passing through Tay Ninh about 20 miles from Ap Nhi. 1st Brigade of the 25th ID normally provided road security from the Go Dau Ha intersection, but could not due to a reduction of force ordered by the Division's new Commanding General, MG Ellis W. Williamson.

The reduction in force resulted from the feared third phase of the Tet Offensive (Vietnamese Lunar New Year). The 1st and 3rd Brigades of the 25th ID usually secured the convoy route, but Williamson pulled 3rd Brigade back to Saigon to defend the city and its approach routes. From 17 to 24 August, the 1st Brigade fended off thirteen enemy battalion or regimental attacks—including seven attacks on 1st Brigade bases. The 1st Brigade's Intelligence (S-2) determined that 16,000 North Vietnamese Army (NVA) combat ready troops of the 5th and 9th Divisions accompanied by an anti-aircraft battalion led the offensive against the 1st Brigade with two attached VC battalions. This was in contrast to the 25th ID's intelligence, which believed that Saigon was the target. The 25th ID then stripped the 1st Brigade of the 2/34th Armor, moving the unit back to Cu Chi, while still ordering the 1st Brigade to carry out all regular duties and that the "MSR clear and secure" mission should be supplied if time and manning allowed. This was a fatal mistake. The Brigade commander believed he could not defend his own bases let alone the MSR; he informed the 25th ID commander of his concerns. The 1st Brigade was left with three undermanned rifle companies, three undermanned mechanized infantry companies, and two 105-mm artillery batteries—with no armor or armor cavalry units attached. Eight MP gun jeeps provided the only security for the 81 vehicles in the convoy.

The Ap Nhi and the Ben Cui Rubber Plantation (known locally as Little Rubber) flanked MSR 22 for about a mile. The Ap Nhi side was mostly farm land while the Little Rubber side had rubber trees growing to fifteen feet of the road. Between the trees and the road were a drainage ditch and an earthen berm. The 88th NVA Regiment elements moved into the Little Rubber on the night of 24 August and prepared to ambush the Tay Ninh resupply convoy. At 1145 hours the

convoy entered the sleepy village of Ap Nhi. It was misting and raining and the ceiling was at about 200 feet. The convoy met a column of Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (ARVN) soldiers marching along the road. The column was marching on the north side of the MSR adjacent to the Little Rubber. The lead vehicles of the convoy had started to leave the village and the ammo and fuel vehicle were alongside the column when ARVN soldiers opened fire on the convoy. The ARVN soldiers turned out to be VC and NVA dressed in ARVN uniforms. This was the signal for the VC and NVA troops positioned in Little Rubber and enemy forces to begin an intense barrage of rocket, machine gun, and automatic weapons fire. A fuel truck was immediately hit and blown up blocking the remainder of the convoy. Thirty-one trucks in front of the destroyed fuel truck sped away according to standard operating procedures (SOP) leaving 50 trucks were stuck in the mile long kill zone. Later an ammunition truck at the rear of the convoy was hit. The initial assault had hit its mark with those two vehicles—sealing the convoy in place. The next targets were the eight gun jeeps and vehicles with radios. The NVA and VC had thoroughly planned the ambush. The ambush occurred at the southernmost limits 1st Brigade TOAR. None of the 1st Brigade's available artillery could range the ambush. The low ceiling also prevented air support from initially being used.

A 7th Battalion driver, Sergeant William W. Seay, was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his gallantry during the ambush. His citation reads, in part, "When his convoy was forced to stop, Seay immediately dismounted and took a defensive position behind the wheels of a vehicle loaded with high-explosive ammunition. As the violent North Vietnamese assault approached to within ten meters of the road, Seay opened fire, killing two of the enemy. He then spotted a sniper in a tree approximately 75 meters to his front and killed him. When an enemy grenade was thrown under an ammunition trailer near his position, without regard for his own safety he left his protective cover, exposing himself to intense enemy fire, picked up the grenade, and threw it back to the North Vietnamese position, killing four more of the enemy and saving the lives of the men around him. Another enemy grenade landed approximately three meters from Seay's position. Again Seay left his covered position and threw the armed grenade back upon the assaulting enemy. After returning to his position he was painfully wounded in the right wrist; however, Seay continued to give encouragement and direction to his fellow soldiers. After moving to the relative cover of a shallow ditch, he detected three enemy soldiers who had penetrated the position and were preparing to fire on his comrades. Although weak from loss of blood and with his right hand immobilized, Seay stood up and fired his rifle with his left hand, killing all three and saving the lives of the other men in his location. As a result of his heroic action, Seay was mortally wounded by a sniper's bullet."

The first to respond to the ambush were "Huey C Model" helicopters, equipped with two door gunners, fourteen rockets, and a mini-gun, from the 25th Aviation Battalion. A Huey pilot saw friendly forces in the ditch while enemy soldiers unloaded the American trucks and carried the supplies into the tree line. The helicopters had a tough time engaging the enemy. The ceiling was still low and the regular angles of attack were impossible. The Huey's normally rolled in on the target with a steep dive from about 1500 feet—the low ceiling meant the pilots had to fire rockets flat often over or under shooting the target. It took eight hours for the division ground reaction force to arrive; the convoy was pinned down the entire time. The delay in the response resulted from a communications problem and the remoteness of the ambush location. Thirteen to fourteen transporters lost their lives in the ambush.

COL Paul Swanson assumed command of the 48th Group from COL Frank Chase in November 1968. Swanson and Metheny opposed the use of gun trucks as employed by 8th Transportation Group at Qui Nhon and the 500th Group at Cam Ranh Bay. Both believed the combat commander was responsible for convoy security. They did not want to crowd into the infantry's mission. They did allow the drivers to put steel plating on the sides of their cabs for individual protection though. Swanson told the infantry if they wanted ammunition, rations and B&B (bear and beverage) the infantry had to keep the Viet Cong off the convoy's backs. The combat divisions also began adding armored personnel carriers, tanks, armored cars, and helicopter air support to reinforce the convoys. The tanks usually drove in the middle of the convoy and the APCs in the lead. Since the convoy speed was 20 to 30 miles per hour, the armored vehicles could keep up. In fact, the drivers of the trucks complained that the APCs preferred to speed up and leave them behind. While their job was to protect the trucks the infantry knew the trucks were the enemy's target and they wanted to get away from them. The 1st Infantry Division was more aggressive at patrolling their MSR but theirs was shorter than that of the 25th Infantry Division.

The run out of Long Binh to Tay Ninh was the biggest problem. The convoy ran right through the crowded streets of Saigon. Vehicles could easily get lost or a VC could climb up on the running board and shoot the drivers. The convoy to Tay Ninh had to depart every morning at 0600. If the convoy had any difficulty then it could not make it back the same day. Drivers would then have to sleep in the cabs of their trucks and return the next day. By February or October 1968, the engineers had completed the Phu Con Bridge so convoys could bypass the congestion of the city. The run to Tay Ninh became faster and safer. The second major ambush occurred on 18 December 1968 in the 25th Infantry Division area of operations killing the convoy commander.

The battalion was awarded its second Meritorious Unit Commendation for Vietnam for the period from 1968-1969.

Prior to COL Swanson, battalion commanders only served six-month tours. LTC Orvil Metheny's predecessor Keith Jones had commanded the 6th Battalion for a year like DeHaven. Swanson believed if combat commanders had to serve one-year tour then logisticians should too. LTC John D. Bruen assumed command of the 7th Battalion from LTC Irving Hilton. Metheny, Hilton and Bruen each commanded one-year in Vietnam. The added continuity greatly enhanced truck battalion operations in Vietnam. Metheny went on to become a Brigadier General; Bruen attained the rank of Lieutenant General.

The battalions ran mostly "Round Robins" meaning they departed in the morning and returned at night. Swanson also ensured that convoys to the Rest and Recreation area at Vung Tau were performed by rotating companies. This ensured that all companies could take advantage of the vacation area. Swanson also scheduled so drivers had a half of day of down time at the recreation area while they were there. Swanson assigned drivers to their own trucks and allowed the drivers to personalize their trucks. Swanson believed the drivers would take care of their truck if they were allowed to armor them or paint the wheel hubs.

Following the August 1968 ambush, the battalion installed M-60 machine guns on battalion jeeps. A directive came down requiring that each truck had two drivers. Most units did not have enough drivers so they had mechanics or other support troop ride “shotgun,” During December 1968 to February 1969, the battalion also experienced a shortage of parts and trained mechanics. During those months the Operational Readiness Rate dropped.

On 5 February 1969, the 261st Transportation Company was released from attachment to the 6th Battalion and attached directly to the 48th Transportation Group Headquarters.

CPT Ken Strickland had just assumed command of the 446th Medium Truck Company at Quang Tri in March 1969 with the mission was to support the 3d Marine Division and their outpost including artillery sites along the DMZ. On 15 April, it received orders to move to Long Binh and join the 6th Transportation Battalion. Strickland led the first of three company convoys of 49 tractors, 43 trailers, and one jeep down to Da Nang at a night. The company consolidated at Da Nang where it boarded LSTs and sailed down the South China Sea then up to Newport. From the port, the company convoys over to TC Hill II and was attached to the 6th Battalion on 20 April. While up north, Strickland had mounted four .50 caliber machineguns in his 2 ½-ton trucks, and had sandbags stacked up on the sides. Upon his arrival at Long Binh, Strickland learned the 48th Group policy of not liking gun trucks and had to dismantle his. Right after the 446th dismantled its gun trucks, it was hit in an ambush.³

The third major ambush occurred in the 25th Infantry Division area of operations in May 1969. 1LT David Krugher led a convoy to Tay Ninh divided into three march units: general staples and building supplies, POL, and finally ammunition. The NVA opened fire on the POL serial and hit the first fuel truck in the tank right over the cab of the tractor and the driver moved to the side of the road and jumped. The second truck was hit and the driver moved to the other side of the road but was not so lucky. A third fuel truck was hit and stopped between the first two and he too was not so lucky. This stopped the march unit and also the ammo march unit coming up from behind. A call went out for help and in the several minutes it took for the 25th ID to arrive, the drivers dismounted and returned fire. Dust offs were called in to remove the wounded and the dead and two or three of them were shot down. Cobra gunships came and then finally the 25th arrived.⁴

When Metheny gave up command in July 1969, his convoys had experienced 10 ambushes, four of which were major. From then on battalion commanders only served for six months.

On 9 August 1969, Strickland gave up command of the 446th and assumed command of the 261st Light Truck Company. The 48th Group Commander had pulled the 261st up and placed it directly under the operational control of the Group with the mission to manage the consolidated trailer activity, which consisted of M1080 trailers. The 48th had lost accountability of trailers after they dropped them off at the destinations. Units used them for other functions and even some commercial companies painted them white and orange to use as their own. The company’s new

³ Ken Strickland emails to Richard Killblane, September 29-October 4, 2008; Subject: Operational Report of the 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck) for Quarterly Period Ending 30 April 1969, RCS CSFOR-65 (R1), Department of the Army, Headquarters, 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck), 1 May 1969.

⁴ Strickland emails.

mission was to track trailers and have enough ready for each convoy on a daily basis. Strickland sent out a trailer hunter team to locate his trailers and stamp them with a die set so he would know they belonged to the 48th.⁵

From the spring to summer of 1970, the 6th Battalion heavily supported the logistical operations for the Cambodian operation. In this operation, the 6th Battalion transported ammunition from the Cojido ammunition complex. The battalion moved over 44,000 short tons of inbound ammunition per month and was instrumental in further transporting supplies further to the operation area. Its success in its ability to move cargo led the battalion to take over the complete responsibility of the Cojido operation including operations of the barge site in the fall of 1970. In October 1970, the 6th Battalion pioneered the utilization of the MILVAN system in Vietnam. The battalion operated 16 5-ton tractors with 35 25-ton Fontaine commercial trailers for clearance of the Cojido Barge Site.

From 7 May through 24 June 1970, the 6th Battalion sent one officer and 25 enlisted men with 22 5-ton medium trucks temporary duty with the 1st Cavalry Division at Quan Loi. They drove convoys to Bu Dop and Snoul, Cambodia in support of operations in the “Fish Hook.”

From 1 February through 15 March 1971, the 6th Battalion relocated the 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division from Song Be to Bien Hoa for stand down and redeployment. The 720th MP Group provided the security for the move. From 1 through 30 March, the battalion relocated the 2nd Brigade and division headquarters from Phouc Vinh to Bien Hoa. The trucks hauled approximately 450 tons of cargo. From 15 March through 15 April, the battalion moved the 3rd Brigade from Fire Support Base Mace to Bien Hoa. In conjunction with this move, the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment was moved from Ham Tan to Fire Support Base Mace.⁶

To simplify the endless coordination with higher and adjacent commands, the 6th Battalion received control of the Cojido and Bien Hoa Barge Sites on 6 December 1970. The battalion then turned over the Cojido barge Site to the 71st Transportation Battalion on 1 June 1971 and then the ARVN assumed responsibility for the Cojido Barge Site on 1 July 1971. The 6th Battalion continued to provide truck support.

The trucks of the 6th Battalion relocated the 2nd, 11th ACR from Fire Base Mace to Phu Loi in May 1971. In June, the 6th Battalion then moved the 2nd, 11th ACR and 31st Engineer Brigade from Phu Loi to Long Binh. In July, the battalion then moved the cavalry from Song Bo back to Phu Loi.

LTC James B. Barron assumed command of the battalion from LTC Robert L. Day on 12 August 1971.

Between July 1969 and June 1971, the battalion commanded as many as eight companies. These companies performed local haul and line haul operations, convoy operations, port and beach

⁵ Strickland emails.

⁶ Day, LTC Robert B., Subject: Operational Report of the 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck) for Quarterly Period Ending 30 April 1971, RCS CSFOR-65 (R2), Department of the Army, Headquarters, 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck), 20 May 1971.

clearance, Cojido Ammunition Supply System operations, and MILVAN operations. Routine convoys ran to Quan Loi, Phouc Vinh, Lai Khe and Vung Tau. Occasional convoys ran to Tan An, Dong Tam, Vinh Long and Ben Tre. Local haul consisted of Saigon, Long Binh and Bien Hoa. The battalion conducted port and beach clearance from Saigon and Newport, and hauled ammunition from Cojido and Bien Hoa Barge Sites. The battalion also established another trailer transfer point with two personnel at Quan Loi in April 1970. The battalion was awarded its third Meritorious Unit Commendation for Vietnam for the period from 1969-1970. In July 1971, the battalion received recognition for 750,000 miles of accident free operations. By August 1971, the battalion was reduced to four companies. The four companies performed local haul and line haul operations, convoy operations, port and beach clearance, and MILVAN operations.⁷

The 402nd Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer) departed on 30 June 1971. The 563rd Transportation Company (Medium Truck) left on 30 November 1971. The 86th, 261st, 321st, and 379th Transportation Companies left Vietnam in 1972. Upon its return to the United States, the 6th Transportation Battalion was inactivated at Oakland Army Base on 14 June 1972. The 572nd Transportation Company (Medium Truck) departed on 24 March 1972 and the 446th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) left on 30 September 1972. During the Vietnam War, the 6th Transportation Battalion participated in 14 campaigns and earned three Meritorious Unit Commendations for service in Vietnam from 1966-1967, 1968-1969 and 1969-1970.

7th Transportation Group

On 8 August 1978, the 6th Battalion's former commander, Major General Oren De Haven assumed command of Fort Eustis. He discovered that all the battalions in the 7th Transportation Group had battle honors from Vietnam except the 38th Truck Battalion. Neither had he 7th Group served in Vietnam. He requested that the 38th Transportation Battalion be reflagged the 6th Battalion since the 38th had no battle honors and the later had served both in World War II and Vietnam. In September, he also requested that the 7th Group be reflagged as the 48th Transportation Group for the same reason.

“Esprit de corps and high troop morale are generated to a large degree by identification with military units which hold excellent combat records. I believe that a noteworthy record of service in the most recent conflict in Vietnam is more meaningful to the younger group of personnel who either actually served in Vietnam, or who are of an age to distinctly recall the conflict.

It is my belief that a redesignation of two active units presently assigned to Fort Eustis which did not experience service in Vietnam, to two other currently inactive units which hold awards for service there would be instrumental in enhancing esprit and morale. An analysis of the history of these units, both quantitative and qualitative, has been accomplished locally, and appears to substantiate my recommendation. World War II records have been included in the analysis.”

On 16 March 1979, the 6th Transportation Battalion was reactivated at Fort Eustis, Virginia, replacing the 38th Transportation Battalion. The 7th Group was not reflagged and this began the longest relationship of the 6th Battalion with any one headquarters. As a theater level

⁷ Flora, LTC L. A., Subject: Operational Report of the 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck) for Quarterly Period Ending 30 April 1970, RCS CSFOR-65 (R2), Department of the Army, Headquarters, 6th Transportation Battalion (Truck), 1 May 1970.

transportation asset, the 7th Group would in time become the most deployed unit in the Army. In almost every US contingency operation, an element of the 7th Group deployed.

LTC Alvin L. Koestring took hold of the colors of the 6th Battalion, which had been located in storage at New Cumberland along with three boxes of historical property located at Pueblo Army Depot, Colorado. The battalion picked up control of the following companies:

100th Transportation Company (Light-Medium Truck)

551st Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)

870th Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)

The 100th Transportation Company participated in REFORGER '79 from 2 January to 28 February 1979. From 22-26 April, the 551st Terminal Transfer Company and elements of the 100th Truck participated in the 11th Battalion Operation JOGJAM at Fort Story. In May, personnel from the 100th Truck Company supported the HHC, 7th Group in Exercise SOLID SHIELD at Fort Bragg, NC.

LTC Stephen T. Christian, Jr. assumed command of the battalion in November 1979. During the following years of President Ronald Reagan and George Bush, the US Army received ample money for training exercises. The 6th Battalion participated in BOLD EAGLE 80 at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida during 30 September through 7 November 1979. This was a large US ATLANTIC Command field training exercise. The battalion also participated in REFORGER in January 1980. REFORGER was an annual two week field training exercise in Germany to test the ability of CONUS based units to deploy to Germany by air, draw their equipment from POMCUS war stocks and fight.

In 1980, the 6th Battalion contained the following units:

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment

100th Transportation Company (Light Truck)

551st Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)

870th Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)

90th Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer)

160th Transportation Detachment (Contract Supervisor)

358th Transportation Detachment (Cargo Documentation)

547th Transportation Detachment (Contract Supervisor)

Transportation Augmentation Detachment (TRADOC Light/Medium Truck Platoon)

USATC&FE Honor Guard (Provisional)

The battalion participated in US Army Reserve annual training, LIFE LINE II, at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania and Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia, from 15 May to 3 June 1981.

1982 was a time of major reorganization. In June 1982, the 6th Battalion lost the 160th Transportation Detachment and picked up the 126th Transportation Detachment in its place. The 547th Detachment was inactivated on 15 July 1982 and the members of the detachment were assigned to HHD. The battalion had lost both of its contract supervisor detachments. The 6th Battalion had two of the four active duty terminal transfer companies. Later the battalion gained the 497th Engineer Company (Port Construction)— the only unit of its kind in the Active Army.

This was the only active duty port construction company. This combination gave the 6th Battalion a capability that no on the Transportation battalion had.

In August 1982, LTC Richard J. Barnaby assumed command of the battalion. On 1 November 1982, the 544th Transportation Detachment (Trailer Transfer) was attached to the 6th Battalion. The subordinate units of the 6th Battalion established trailer transfer points during training exercise LIFELINE from April to May 1983 and participated in Exercise BOLD EAGLE 84 in Florida during September 1983.

The 870th CTC participated in Joint Readiness Exercise BRIGHT STAR in Egypt, 13 July to 15 September 1983 and did A/DACG support at Langley AFB in support of the deployment and redeployment for Exercise AHAUS TARA 83, from 5-24 August 1983.

In July 1984, LTC Douglas D. Waterhouse assumed command of the battalion. The 6th Battalion participated in numerous major training exercise such BORDER STAR 85 at Fort Bliss, Texas, BRIGHT STAR in Egypt, GALLANT EAGLE 85 in California, and KINDLE LIBERTY in Panama. The 551st Terminal Transfer Company under the command of CPT Steven S. Slyfield, deployed to Fort Wainwright, Alaska, in support of Exercise BRIM FROST in January and February 1983. The 551st ran the A/DACG for the 9th Infantry Division and 101st Airborne Division. Several personnel from the battalion deployed to the Antarctica in support of scientific research during Operation DEEP FREEZE 85 from October 1985 to February 1985. The battalion also continued its mission of supporting training of the officer basic and officer advance courses at Fort A. P. Hill, Virginia.

The 6th Battalion deployed 45 personnel to JTF-Bravo to operate the Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (A/DACG) at Palmerola Air Base in Honduras in June 1986 in support of exercises BLAZING TRAILS, AHAUS TARA 86 and CABANAS. The US base of operations in Honduras became increasingly important in countering the expansion of communist insurgency from Nicaragua into neighboring Honduras and El Salvador.

The 870th ran three air terminals at Wainwright Army Airfield, Elmendorf and Eielson Air Force Bases, Alaska in support of Exercise BRIMFROST 85 from 3 January to 11 February 1985. They processed a total of 20,873 personnel and 6,508 short tones aboard 689 C-5A, C-141B and C-130 aircraft. The company again participated in BRIGHT STAR from 13 July to 30 August 1985 by operating a marshalling area for the staging of all wheel and tracked vehicles during deployment and redeployment. 11 personnel from the company deployed to Honduras to run an A/DACG from 10 to 30 September 1985 then on 4 October, the company completed the A/DACG at Langley AFB in support of Exercise BOLD EAGLE 86.

LTC Charles M. Hanson assumed command of the battalion in July 1986. The battalion immediately participated in the activation ceremony of the Transportation Regiment at Fort Eustis then deployed to Camp Roberts, California, in support of Exercise CELTIC CROSS IV. This exercise tested and validated the conversion of the 7th Infantry Division to the first new light infantry division. The battalion ran the A/DACG at LeMoore Naval Air Station. The 870th also operated the rail terminal activities at Camp Roberts. The 551st Trailer Transfer Company operated the A/DACG at Vandenburg Air Base. Other elements of the battalion participated in

BOLD EAGLE at the same time. Soldiers from the different companies deployed to Port McMurdo, Antarctica in September for support of the movement of 6,000 scientific research team to Operation DEEP FREEZE, October 1986 to March 1987. Operation DEEP FREEZE was a multi-national scientific exploration of Antarctica that began in 1955. The 7th Group would annually send soldiers to support the Naval Support Unit Antarctica.

The 6th Battalion picked up the 26th and 30th Quartermaster Detachments (ROWPU). The Army created these Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Units around the possibility of fighting a war in desert region of Southwest Asia. The following year required the teams to train up on their new equipment.

Operation ELDER STATESMAN, Panama

Relations with General Manuel Noriega began to deteriorate during the summer of 1987. Drug indictments against the military leader of Panama, Manuel Noriega, created another US crisis in 1988. In February 1988, members of his Panamanian Defense Force launched an unsuccessful coup. As a result, President Ronald Regan responded with a troop buildup the next month. The 870th Terminal Transfer sent a 40-man detachment to run an A/DACG at Howard AB, Panama in support of Operation ELDER STATESMAN on 18 March 1988. After the initial buildup of forces, the company rotated 13 soldiers down to Panama every six months.

Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) meanwhile developed two contingency plans, one for deployment and the other for offensive operations. The deployment plan initially required 96 hours of deployment into country to cover the infiltration of Special Operations Forces (SOF). The offensive plan called for simultaneous strikes at H-hour with the SOF targeting command and control facilities and the Army Forces neutralizing the Panamanian Defense Force (PDF). Essentially the SOF would cut the head off of the snake and the rest would kill the body.

Four soldiers deployed to Korea with the 551st Terminal Transfer Company for Exercise TEAM SPIRIT 89 from 25 January to 31 February 1989. A platoon-sized unit deployed to the Air Base in Antarctica in support of Operation DEEP FREEZE from 19 January to 15 February 1989. The platoon offloaded *Green Wave* which carried various types of containerized and break-bulk cargo. The company sent one NCO to Alaska to support the local movement control center for Exercise BRIM FROST from 28 December 1988 to 12 February 1989. One platoon provided operated the cargo yard at Fort Story and Norfolk Naval Base in support to Marines during Exercise SOLID SHIELD 89.

Operation NIMROD DANCER, Panama

LTC Charles A. Seland assumed command of the battalion on 6 July 1988. In May 1989, General Manuel Noriega nullified the Panamanian presidential elections which resulted in civil unrest. In response, President George Bush deployed 2,000 soldiers, essentially brigade (minus) from the 7th Infantry Division (Light), to Panama on 12 May as a show of force operation, known as NIMROD DANCER. The 870th Terminal Transfer Company reinforced the original 13-man detachment with an additional 12 soldiers. The soldiers also offloaded 26 40-foot containers from the *USN Bellatrix* when it delivered a mechanized battalion of the 5th ID (M) to Mira Florez Locks the next month. That was the first time that any ship had been offloaded at any of the locks in Panama. The 126th Detachment deployed to Panama to process the return of Army

dependents, their household property and privately owned vehicles during Operation BLADE JEWEL. The detachment returned in July.

That same July, the 26th and 30th ROWPU Detachments sent ten men to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to link up with two skid mounted ROWPU systems after the Navy water purification system failed. They placed the system into operation and trained the Navy personnel on how to use it. The 551st Transportation Company participated in Exercise TEAM SPIRIT 89 in Korea from January to April 1989 and Operation DEEP FREEZE from January to February 1990 in Antarctica.

On 16 August 1989, the 870th Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer) was reorganized and redesignated to the 870th Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer). The company lost 34 billets, but received more 4K, 10K and 50K forklifts and M915 trucks. The 870th CTC deployed a 13-man detachment to Charleston, South Carolina during October to provide assistance to local residence after hurricane Hugo decimated the area. During the month of November, the company sent a platoon over to Langley numerous times to operated an A/DACG in support of deployment to Exercise BRIGHT STAR 90.

Operation JUST CAUSE, Panama

2LT Zandra Robinson's 12-man detachment of the 870th CTC was scheduled to redeploy to the home station on 21 December 1989 but tension continued to build in Panama, and on 15 December, General Noriega announced before the National Assembly that a state of war existed with the United States. Later that day, Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) soldiers shot and killed Marine LT Robert Paz. In response, President Bush issued the order for US forces to neutralize the PDF, capture Noriega and restore the elected leadership. Operation JUST CAUSE commenced at 0100 hours on 20 December. All CONUS forces would deploy into to Panama by air. There were only two C-141 capable airfields in the Panama City area; Howard Air Base and Torrijos-Tocumen. Since the primary means of deployment into Panama was by air and the US had to have two points of entry. This required the Rangers and 82nd Airborne Division to seize Torrijos-Tocumen International Airport. One A/DACG platoon of the 403rd CTC, out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina, parachuted in with the 82nd at Torrijos and another landed at Howard Air Force Base to augment the 12-man detachment of the 870th. Howard AB remained the primary airport of debarkation throughout the operation as two brigades of the 7th Infantry Division (Light) and follow-on forces flowed through it. One brigade of the 7th ID would expand operations westward toward the Costa Rican border while the other helped the brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division clear the city of Panama of resistance.⁸

At 1700 hours on 20 December, personnel from 1st Corps Support Command (COSCOM) arrived in Panama and Robinson's A/DACG detachment fell under their control. The A/DACG team prepared load plans for both intra-theater deployment to the first western staging base at Rio Hato and to Torrijos. Two soldiers of the detachment flew to Rio Hato to supervise an A/DACG with the 7th ID. Upon linking up with the 7th ID, they were told to return fire and take cover. They were returned to Howard at approximately 0300 hours the next morning. The detachment at Howard also had responsibility to ensure all arriving troops met with their liaison and were present at their SP (start point) as scheduled. They also arranged the staging area for

⁸ CPT Diego Reyes, Subj: Quarterly Historical Report, 870th Transportation Company (CT), 9 April 1990.

palletized equipment and conducted joint inspections of vehicles and equipment. There was a heavy flow of air traffic into Howard and the detachment from the 870th CTC worked from 1900 to 0700 hours daily. The detachment from the 403rd CTC worked the other half of the day. On three occasions, the crew from the 870th came under sniper fire and had to take a defensive position on the perimeter around the airfield. The tremendous volume of air flow slowed down by the third week allowing the detachment time to help the USAF built pallets and organize the Air force warehouse.⁹

15 soldiers from the 551st CTC deployed to Howard to run A/DACG until March. The 497th Engineer Company also deployed to Panama from January to May 1990. At the same time, the rest of the 551st participated in Exercise AHAUS TARA and FUERTOS CAMINOS in Honduras. The 551st rotated the 12 to 14 soldiers to the A/DACG in Panama in March and June 1990.

Noriega had sought sanctuary at the Papal Nuncio, which ironically provided the leadership of the civil dissent against him. On 3 January 1990, Noriega surrendered and that night he was secreted to Howard where he changed into prison clothes for his flight to Miami to await trial. The A/DACG night shift participated in this historic event. Finally on 29 January, Robinson's detachment received its orders to return to home.¹⁰

The rest of the 870th CTC uploaded its equipment for movement by rail to the point of debarkation for participation in Exercise TEAM SPIRIT 90 in Korea in January. 3 officers and 71 soldiers of the 870th CTC along with truck drivers of the 100th Medium Truck Company, cargo handlers of the 551st Transportation Company and cooks from the 497th Engineer Company flew out of Langley on 30 January 1990. Headquarters, 24th Terminal Battalion provided the command and control for the transportation support of Blue forces. They returned to Fort Eustis on 18 May and downloaded its equipment off of 21 railcars on 21 May.

On 16 April 1990, the company also had a 12-man detachment perform A/DACG operations at Langley AFB in support of Exercise OCEAN VENTURE 90 where they uploaded two C141s. On 6 June 1990, the company also uploaded one 10K forklift and one CUCV onto an LCM8 bound for St Vincents for participation in Exercise TRADE WINDS. On 18 June, the company deployed 7 soldiers in support of the joint readiness exercise.

Operation DESERT SHIELD/STORM

LTC Henry A. Alcott assumed command of the battalion on 3 July 1990. On 2 August, the Iraqi Army invaded Kuwait. The United States responded with an immediate deployment of troops in Saudi Arabia to prevent Saddam Hussein from seizing control of the oil fields there, Operation DESERT SHIELD. All the units of the 7th Group went on alert and prepared for possible deployment to the Persian Gulf. On 11 August, the 870th Terminal Transfer established an A/DACG at Langley Air Force Base to help deploy units from Fort Eustis. They turned the job over to the 8th Transportation Company on 1 September so they could deploy on 5 October.

⁹ Reyes, "History Report."

¹⁰ Reyes, "History Report."

The 7th Transportation Group deployed with the 10th and 24th Terminal Battalions to Saudi Arabia in August. The 6th Battalion provided command and control for the rear detachment and was attached to the 8th Transportation Brigade in October. Other units of the 6th Battalion subordinate units deployed without its headquarters. The 551st Terminal Transfer deployed with the 24th Battalion on 11 August. The 544th Detachment deployed as part of the 419th Transportation Company on 13 October 1990 to 25 May 1991. The 90th Trailer Transfer Detachment deployed on 13 October 1990 to 25 May 1991 as part of the 68th Transportation Battalion. The 157th Cargo Documentation Detachment deployed with the 24th Battalion in August and remained until the last units were withdrawn in August 1991. The Dive Detachment deployed to theater and helped rehabilitate the Port of Shuyabah in Kuwait after the Iraqi Army had evacuated it.

On November 29, the UN Security Council passed a resolution that Iraq withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991. CENTCOM began buildup of forces for offensive operations. On 15 December 1990, HHD, 6th Battalion deployed to Saudi Arabia on 16 December and the remainder of the 7th Group non-deployed personnel fell under the 71st Battalion. Its equipment had sailed on the *USAV James McHenry* from Third Port on 17 November. The 6th Battalion served as a multi-functional Logistics Task Force providing direct support to the 1st Armored Cavalry Regiment and non-divisional units of the VII Corps. The US led coalition force defeated the Iraqi Army and drove them from Kuwait in a 100-hour war that began on 19 January. The problem was that the UN charter left Saddam Hussein in power in Iraq. This would require a US presence in the Southwest Asia. The 6th Transportation Battalion received a fourth Meritorious Unit Commendation Award and returned to Fort Eustis on 9 August 1991.

Following the Gulf War, the United States looked for its peace dividend by downsizing the military machine that ensured the peace. The 90th Trailer Transfer Detachment, 157th Cargo Documentation Detachment and the 544th Transportation Detachment were inactivated in September 1992. By 1993, the 6th Battalion consisted of the following units:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 100th Transportation Company (Light Truck)
- 497th Engineer Company (Port Construction)
- 551st Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
- 870th Transportation Company (Terminal Transfer)
- 126th Transportation Detachment
- Transportation Augmentation Detachment
- 26th Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU)
- 30th Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the super powers no longer kept smaller countries in check. The smaller countries returned to their former squabbles. Wars broke out with greater frequency. Over the next decade, the US Army would deploy on more overseas missions than it had over the previous two centuries.

Operation RESTORE HOPE, Somalia

In January 1991, the Communist regime of Mohammed Siad Barre collapsed in Somalia and the country was torn apart by civil war. The famine situation added to the crisis and the war caused a

total collapse of the government infrastructure which could not deliver the food aid arriving at the port to the growing refugee population which needed it. The transportation infrastructure completely broke down as tribal warlord fought over control of the most precious commodity in the famine ridden country of Somalia – food. The United Nations began to airlift humanitarian aid to the worst famine stricken areas of Somalia and Kenya in August 1992. They needed to establish a transportation network to deliver the aid from the port to the humanitarian organizations throughout the country.

In December 1992, a Marine Expeditionary Unit landed and secured the port Mogadishu then the 7th Transportation Group deployed two battalion task forces to Mogadishu to deliver humanitarian aid to the humanitarian relief organizations. The advance parties of the 6th Transportation Battalion, under the command of LTC James R. Chalkley, deployed with the 24th Terminal Battalion to Somalia in support of Operation RESTORE HOPE on 20 December 1992, just prior to Christmas. The 24th Battalion ran port operations while the 6th Battalion cleared the port. The main force of the battalion deployed 4 January 1993 and providing line haul, airfield, and driving support to the United Nations and Coalition Forces.

The 6th Battalion Task Force opened the airport with an Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group (A/DACG) and provided cargo transfer support and conducted port clearance and onward movement with line haul motor transports. The 7th Transportation Group Task Force provided command and control for the two battalions, under the Joint Task Force Support Command.

The 6th Battalion provided command and control for the following:

24th Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Renee L. Miller, Fort Riley, Kansas.

57th Light-Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Patrick Lovesee, Fort Drum, New York.

100th Light Truck-Medium Company, commanded by CPT Michael A. Meneghini, Fort Eustis, Virginia.

360th Medium Truck Company (POL), commanded by CPT Christina D. Hatton, Fort Carson, Colorado.

870th Cargo Transfer Company, commanded by CPT Kenneth Johnson, Fort Eustis, Virginia.

30th Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU) was attached to the 24th Battalion.

To operate the port, the 24th Battalion had to finish a massive port rehabilitation started by the Navy and Marines. The 6th Battalion's dive detachment also moved sunken tugs and patrol boats from the piers to open critical berthing space. While the 24th Battalion set about opening the port, the 6th Battalion initially established its headquarters at the Mogadishu Airport and moved 6,000 tons of cargo and 8,268 passengers.

After a month, it moved to Baledogie, on the outskirts of an old Soviet airfield. The soldiers called it "Firebase SNAFU" from a term from World War II, Situation Normal, All Fouled Up. The companies set up camps in different areas. Initially, the biggest problem that the convoys face driving through the streets of Mogadishu was theft. The Rules of Engagement only permitted the use of lethal force to defend lives, not protect property. The starving Somalis figured very fast that they would not be shot for stealing. After trial and error with everything from chicken wire to axe handles, the drivers finally learned that pepper spray worked best. By

the middle of February Ali Mahdi turned over his technicals (crew served weapons mounted on pick ups) over to United Task Force (UNITAF) control and the 6th Battalion relocated them to an area where they could be rehabilitated for use by the Somalia National Police.

After 60 days, the 6th Battalion returned to Fort Eustis with its two companies and turned the A/DACG operation over to Task Force 24, then under the United Nations Somalia (UNISOM) control. The last element of the battalion returned in March 1994.

LTC Kathleen M. Gainey assumed command of the battalion on 28 June 1994. This was a time of major reorganization the result of further downsizing. The 100th Light Truck and the 870th Cargo Transfer Companies were inactivated on 15 September 1994. Similarly, the US Army began withdrawing units from Europe. In 1995, the 89th Medium Truck Company transferred from the 53rd Transportation Battalion in Kaiserslautern, Germany to the 6th Battalion. The entire company, with equipment, families and furniture moved to Fort Eustis. The advance party arrived at Fort Eustis on 20 April and the main body, 71 soldiers, 87 family members, four cats and five dogs, arrived on 23 May. Its M915 Tractors and M872 Trailers departed the Port of Antwerp on 27 May and arrived at Newport News Port on 6 June. The 331st Floating Causeway Company was activated in June 1995 as part of the 6th Battalion. It was inactivated at Fort Story as a LACV-30 company in 1995 because the Army no longer needed air cushion vehicles. The 331st Transportation Company (Floating Causeway) was transferred from the 11th Battalion to the 6th Battalion and the 558th Transportation Company (Marine Maintenance) was transferred from the 10th Battalion to the 6th Battalion.

By 1995, the 6th Truck Battalion consisted of the following units:

- Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
- 89th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
- 331st Transportation Company (Floating Causeway)
- 497th Engineer Company (Port Construction)
- 551st Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
- 558th Transportation Company (Marine Maintenance)
- Dive Company (Provisional)
 - 74th Engineer Detachment
 - 86th Engineer Detachment
 - 511th Engineer Detachment
 - 544th Engineer Detachment
 - 569th Engineer Detachment
- Transportation Augmentation Detachment
- 26th Quartermaster Detachment (ROWPU)
- 390th Transportation Detachment (Contract Supervisor)

In October 1994, the US Army deployed troops to Kuwait for Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR in response to Saddam Hussein's saber rattling. He would remain a constant problem in the region.

Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY, Haiti

President Bill Clinton deployed a forced entry task force to Haiti in September 1994 to force the military junta to permit the legally elected President Jean Aristead to assume office. Prior to the arrival of the US forces, the military junta agreed to relent. The 10th Terminal Service Battalion led the transportation task force down with elements of the 6th Battalion. The 497th Port Construction Company and the 331st Floating Causeway Company deployed to Haiti as part of the force opening package, but upon arrival, the company was not needed and returned. The 551st Cargo Transfer Company deployed to Panama on 1 September 1994 to support Special Forces in securing the borders of Peru and Ecuador during Operation SAFE BORDER. They returned in April 1995. HHD, 6th Battalion also participated in Exercise PRAIRIE WARRIOR at Fort Lee, Virginia, in May 1995.

LTC Luis R. Visot assumed command of the 6th Battalion in 2000. LTC Visot was a US Army Reserve officer on exchange from Florida. A Regular Army officer commanded a Reserve transportation battalion in Florida.

RESOLUTE PHOENIX VI

From 24 to 28 January 2002, HHC, 7th Transportation Group, 24th Transportation Battalion and HHD, 6th Battalion conducted a vessel discharge operations, MDMF and Command Post Exercise at Fort Story in preparation for the upcoming JLOTS NATIVE ATLAS '02. The 24th Battalion established a battalion-level life support area (LSA) on 24 January then conducted LO/LO and RO/RO operations off of the LMSR *USNS Mendanca* from 26 to 28 January.

JLOTS - NATIVE ATLAS '02

The 6th and 24th Transportation Battalion conducted a JLOTS exercise under the control of the 143rd TRANSCOM at Camp Pendleton, CA from 20 March to 3 April. The exercise discharged the equipment of the 2nd Brigade, 3rd ID (M), which had loaded aboard the *USNS Seay* at the Port of Savannah, Georgia, so the brigade could attend the National Training Center at Fort Erwin, California. This JLOTS and command relationship would exercise the tasks of the transportation units inherent in the CENTCOM war plans.

The 10th Transportation Battalion conducted the rail upload of 272 pieces of equipment of the 6th and 24th Battalion at Fort Eustis, Virginia, on 2 March. This included 22 containers, three KALMAR RTCHs, two dozers, two DV-43 RTCHs and two cranes. From 20 to 24 March, the 7th Group units conducted rail download of their equipment and established C4I nodes.¹¹

The 24th Battalion took its organic 169th Port Operation Cargo Detachment (POCD), 491st Automated Cargo Documentation (ACD) Detachment, 492nd Transportation Company and the 567th Cargo Transfer Company (CTC). The 24th Battalion also received support from the 652nd, 834th, 1181st and 1397th TTB. The 1397th TTB augmented the 491st Automated Cargo Detachment at North Island. The 6th Transportation Battalion provided port clearance and forward movement to the NTC. It deployed with the 89th Medium Truck Company, 558th Floating Craft General Support (FCGS) Company, 551st Cargo Transfer Company, the 384th and 622nd Movement Control Teams. The battalion picked up control of two USAR truck companies when it arrived. The 24th Battalion would offload the equipment and the 6th Battalion would clear it from the beach to their final destination. Commercial lowboy company would move the heavy

¹¹ LTC James Herson, "Native Atlas '02 Initial Hot Wash," Camp Pendleton, CA, 8 April 2002.

equipment like tanks and Bradleys to the NTC. The 53rd Movement Control Battalion provided the movement control for the operation. The two MCTs provided the 53rd Battalion 24-hour capability. The Navy provided LCUs for lighterage and SEABEES constructed the Trident pier and RO/RO Discharge Facility (RRDF). The Trident pier was stabbed into Red Beach and the RRDF was anchored at sea. The Navy's Joint Lighterage Control Center (JLCC) coordinated the schedule of its LCUs.¹²

On 28 March, the 24th Battalion conducted helicopter discharge pier side at NINAS. On 29 March, *USNS Seay* arrived and began discharge. The 169th POCD boarded the *Seay* to discharge the equipment. One purpose of the exercise was to validate the new stern ramp on the *USNS Seay*. The Navy failed to inform the 24th Battalion of this agenda during the In Progress Reviews (IPR). This took the 24th Battalion by surprise and created an atmosphere of distrust. They wanted to see if the RRDF could support the weight of the stern ramp with an Abrams tank. Since the free-floating ramp was only connected by cables, the Navy wanted to see if it would damage the ship during rough seas. The rolling stock drove onto the RRDF then Navy LCU-2000s discharged equipment and cargo off of and transferred it to the Navy Trident Pier at Red Beach or the fixed pier at Delmar Basin. LTC James Herson, commander of the 24th Battalion, felt that the reliance on the Navy's lighterage and Trident pier caused unnecessary delays as their priorities were not the same as the Army's.¹³

Navy LCUs dropped ramp at the Delmar Basin. There the KALMAR RTCH of the 567th CTC lifted the containers out of the hold. The limited reach of the KALMAR required the LCUs to reposition themselves several times so that the KALMAR could pick up the heavy containers. This caused the LCUs to delay longer than the available tide window, which stranded them until the next tide.¹⁴

The operation shut down at 1700 on 30 March due to inclement weather and high sea states. The 24th Battalion completed the discharge of the *Seay* on 3 April. They failed to achieve their 96-hour goal projected in the regional OPLANS. This was due to the lack of vessel support provided by the Navy. "During the first and last shifts of discharge operations, the Navy provided only one vessel to transport vehicles to and from the beach."¹⁵

From 6 to 11 April, the 7th Group assets prepared their equipment for rail upload. Meanwhile the 2nd Brigade moved to NTC from 8 to 9 April and the 7th Group equipment rail uploaded from 9 to 12 April. The advon redeployed on 10 April and the main body redeployed on 17 April.¹⁶

In July 2002, USCENTCOM sponsored Operation VIGILANT HAMMER from 10 to 31 July. The 7th Transportation Group wanted to download one Large, Medium Speed, Roll-on, Roll-off (LMSR) vessel, the *Lotkins*, from the Afloat Preposition Stock (APS) 3 at Port of Au Shuyabah in order to determine the download time and also how many Prepo vessels they could berth at the pier at one time. The planners of the transportation commands spent one day watching the

¹² Native Atlas and discussion with SFC Michael Aguilar by Richard Killblane, 5 May 2005.

¹³ Native Atlas and Aguilar.

¹⁴ Native Atlas.

¹⁵ Native Atlas, p. 11.

¹⁶ Native Atlas.

download then loaded up in two buses and visited Camp Arifjan, which was still under construction, and the location of where the other staging camps would be. All were just empty spaces in the desert. MAJ Thomas Jones, 6th Battalion S-3, brought his operations sergeant, SFC Michael Aguilar. MAJ Craig Czak, 106th Battalion S-3, brought his operation sergeant, SFC David Munsey. MAJ Thomas Jones, 6th Battalion S-3, brought his operations sergeant, SFC Michael Aguilar, because of his institutional knowledge of the battalion.

At that time, no one had determined which truck battalion would extend the line of communication into Iraq. Since the 106th Battalion did not belong to the 7th Group, MAJ Czak believed that they would answer directly to the 143rd TRANSCOM. They thought that they would receive the mission to cross into Iraq. LTC Helmick was confident that his 6th Battalion would get the mission because the 143rd TRANSCOM and the 7th Group had a long established working relationship. On the last day of the planning conference, the transportation planners met at CFLCC headquarters. There MG David E. Kratzer, Commander of the 377th TSC, thanked everyone for coming then reassured them that they were going to war. From then on, the battalions made serious preparations for war.

By December 2002 the 6th Battalion was composed of the following units:

Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment
89th Transportation Company (Medium Truck)
331st Transportation Company (Floating Causeway)
551st Transportation Company (Cargo Transfer)
558th Transportation Company (Marine Maintenance)
Dive Company (Provisional)
384th Movement Control Team
622nd Movement Control Team

Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) I

LTC Jeffrey Helmick assumed command of the 6th Transportation Battalion (Motor) on 13 June 2002. COL Visot would assume command of the 32nd Transportation Group (USAR), which would also deploy to Kuwait. That summer, President George W. Bush directed CENTCOM to prepare for possible military action against Saddam Hussein in the event he did not comply with UN resolutions resulting from the last war. By the end of the year, it became clear that the units would deploy to Kuwait. The 6th Battalion would function as a truck battalion and take its organic 89th Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Jeffrey E. Wagstaff, and 551st Cargo Transfer Company, commanded by CPT Shawn M. O'Brien. The Battalion had originally planned to deploy by ship and were configured to do so, but in early January, USFORCOM notified 6th Battalion that they would deploy by air instead.

The 89th Medium Truck deployed by air out of Langley Air Force Base on 6 January 2003. The C-5 laid over in Moron, Spain, for five days waiting for aircraft parts, diplomatic clearance, runway space and flight crews. The battalion personnel had to wait around the hanger the whole time. The company arrived in Kuwait City on 13 January, one day ahead of the rest of the battalion. They spent the next day adjusting to the time difference then drew their prepositioned equipment. Two days later they began convoy operations.

The HHD, 6th Battalion ADVON deployed on 6 January and the main body followed on 13 January. The trail party closed on 1 March. At the time that the 6th Battalion arrived, the facilities at Camp Arifjan were not finished. The battalion initially moved its people into the vacant warehouses. During that first week they started looking around for another location to set up camp. They found a suitable location a mile away where they built a tent city. Two weeks later, the battalion moved into its new home which they called Camp Arlington. After 6th Battalion left Kuwait, Camp Arlington was absorbed by Camp Arifjan and renamed Zone VI.

Since the 89th Transportation Company was the only line-haul company in theater for nearly a month, it moved the majority of the theater's containers of US Army and US Marine Corps equipment and delivered ammunition to the Ammunition Storage Points (ASP). BG Jack Stultz, Commander of the 143rd Transportation Command, asked the 6th Battalion to perform the role of Port Support Activity (PSA) and drive every type of vehicle from truck to tank off of the arriving vessels. Since most of the equipment was prepositioned in Kuwait, the troops arrived by air and the 6th Battalion trucks had to transport the men to their equipment for drawing then the 96th HET Company hauled the tanks to their destinations. The 6th Battalion had spent 85 days moving the Marines and the British units into their positions.

The 6th Battalion was enhanced by Pallet Load System (PLS), Heavy Equipment Trailer (HET) and M915 companies from other installations.

15th PLS Company, commanded by CPT Wayne Hiatt Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

68th Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Edward J. Gawlik III, Germany.

89th Medium Truck Company, commanded by CPT Jeffrey E. Wagstaff.

96th HET Company, commanded by CPT Todd A. Browning, Fort Hood, Texas.

551st Cargo Transfer Company, commanded by CPT Shawn M. O'Brien.

About a week out from the beginning of the air war, the 6th Battalion shifted its priority to getting itself ready for war. LTC Helmick would sit and discuss with CSM Perry what they thought they would need. CSM Dwayne Perry and SFC Michael Aguilar were his "go-to" men for finding what the battalion needed. The battalion signed for one of four mobile kitchens, government rations, 73 Temper tents, 100 to 200 hundred shower, four Mobile Kitchen Trailers, plastic toilets and other comforts for life support. Helmick, a former infantry officer who carried all his comfort items on his back, believed that there was no excuse for the soldiers of a truck battalion to live in misery.

The logistics package that would cross the "berm" into Iraq was divided into three packages: ADDER 1, 2 and 3. The 6th Transportation Battalion, with HHD, 7th Transportation Group and other theater level assets formed ADDER 2. The ground war was originally supposed to begin on 21 March, after the "shock and awe" campaign. ADDER 2 was scheduled to cross the border on G+2. The initial success of the bombing campaign caused CFLCC to move G-Day up to 20 March. LTC Helmick led his convoy across the border on the morning of 22 March, G+1. The 6th Battalion's objective was to assume control of the Forward Support Base (FSB) CEDAR from 3rd COSCOM and establish Logistic Support Area (LSA) ADDER at the Tallil Airport.

The convoy stretched along Alternate Supply Route (ASR) ASPEN in a single lane for as far as the eye could see. Helmick's biggest fear was for the convoy to stop. His fear was realized when

incoming artillery struck two hours after they crossed the border. The convoy came to a halt. Helmick raced ahead in his HMMV to see what had happened. The MPs in the front of the convoy had halted. When he asked them why, they said that their doctrine called for them to stop until the artillery stopped. Helmick had to reach CEDAR that night. He told the MPs that if they would not lead, then to pull off to the side of the road and let his convoy pass. Helmick then led the convoy. They reached Main Supply Route (MSR) TAMPA, Route 1, and all the vehicles that could crowded onto the six lane highway with the combat units. They arrived at the intersection of MSR TAMPA and ASR BOSTON, FSB CEDAR, around 1600 and it took all night for the rest of the convoy to close. The convoy pulled off ASR BOSTON quickly established security. The drivers of the vehicles pulled guard all night.

On 22 March, the 3rd ID(M) seized the town of Nasiriyah with its two bridges over the Euphrates River intact, 150 miles inside the Iraq border. Following that, the 3rd Brigade captured the Tallil Air Base south of the city. The 1st MEF advanced along Route TOPEKA, the Basra highway, and engaged enemy resistance from Saddam Hussein's Baath Party militia at Basra. The plan was to get to Baghdad as quick as possible without getting decisively engaged in clearing cities along the way.

The morning of 23 March, LTC Helmick with BG Stultz, the 7th Group Commander and their operations officers drove to the Tallil Airport. They arrived as the 3rd ID(M) was driving the Iraqis away from the airfield. The Iraqis had obstructed the airfield with everything they could push onto it and booby-trapped the obstacles. It took engineers 48 hours to clear the runway. Helmick's advance party realized that the area would not support both the airfield and truck operations. Helmick returned and sent 1LT Jeremy Russell's platoon of the 551st CTC up to Tallil to set up air terminal operations with the US Air Force. Helmick then sent SFC Michael Aguilar back down MSR TAMPA to look for a suitable location for the truck operations. Aguilar and the company first sergeants located an area off of MSR TAMPA eight miles south. At that time, the MSR still belonged to the US Marines and Helmick needed permission to set up operations.

On 25 March, BG Stultz gave the 6th Transportation Battalion permission to use the new site and begin running convoys. The 551st CTC set up a Trailer Transfer Point (TTP) at the new CEDAR site and the 6th Battalion sent trucks back to the 106th Battalion's logistic base at NAVISTAR to pick up loads. The 6th Battalion ran a pull-push operation. They picked up cargo from the 106th Truck Battalion at Convoy Support Center NAVISTAR on the Kuwait/Iraq border and delivered it to the V Corps rear at BUSHMASTER. However, that day a shamal, "the mother of all sand storms," shut down operations. The sky turned black from the sand storm and soldiers could not see a few feet in front of them. The hurricane force winds blew 27 tents away. After the winds died down the next day, the 6th Battalion began convoy operations.

The 6th Battalion had two separate convoy operations on G-Day. When the G-Day moved up one day, the 3rd ID(M) left with only four days sustainment instead of five and consumed one day while waiting. They crossed with only three days' sustainment of food and water. BG Charles Fletcher found 13 empty trailers of the CPT Wagstaff's 89th TC and directed them to go back and pick up the remaining one-day supply of MREs and bottled water. Wagstaff's convoy spent six

days on the road and delivered its critical cargo right up to the within a few miles of the front lines.

The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) would move by helicopter to a position to strike Baghdad from the south. The 6th Battalion gave a platoon of the 96th HET to the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) to haul its heavy engineer equipment to establish its Forward Area Resupply Points. For two weeks they held on to the platoon and denied that they had them. Finally when the 6th Battalion reported the platoon as missing in action did the 101st admit having them and BG Stultz forced them to give the HET platoon up.

On D+2, 22 March, the forward element for the 450th MCB, commanded by MAJ Steve Comstock, crossed the border with 377th TSC and established operations at Tallil Air Base. Comstock set up the MCT, commanded by CPT Angela Greenfield, at Tallil and the other, commanded by CPT Brian Rochelle, at CEDAR. None-the-less, the 6th Transportation Battalion received its taskings directly from the 7th Group. Helmick turned the 96th HET Company over to the 106th Battalion since he no longer needed to haul tanks. The 6th Battalion had the 68th, 109th and 233rd Medium Truck Companies and the 15th PLS Company.

After the 3rd Infantry Division seized Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) on 4 April, LTC Helmick sent 1LT Roepke's platoon of the 551st CTC to set up operations there.

On 29 April, the 6th Battalion deployed a command and control element of 12 Soldiers to FLB RESOLUTE near Baghdad.

Around 7 May, BG Fletcher met with BG Thomas Robinson, Commander of 3rd Transportation Agency Movement Control (TAMC), and LTC Mark Corson, Commander of the 450th MCB, to discuss movement control problems. Fletcher was not happy with either movement control or the sustainment that he was getting from theater. That early in the war priority was still food, water, ammunition and fuel. His 27th MCB had not even moved forward so he took all his TMRs to the 450th MCB. Fletcher wanted to move the 27th MCB forward and push the Corps rear boundary back to Kuwaiti border so he would have control of everything in Iraq.¹⁷

Line of communication stretched from NAVISTAR to CEDAR to SCANIA to ANACONDA, north of Baghdad.

On 3 June, the C2 node redeployed back to CEDAR.

After a month into the operation, the 106th Battalion began pushing cargo up to CEDAR and the 6th Battalion pushed cargo up to ANACONDA.

The advance party of the 6th Battalion returned to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. From 8 to 10 June the main body followed with the trail party closing on 11 June. The battalion received its redeployment order from the 7th Transportation Group on 13 June. COL Thomas M. Baker assumed command of the 7th Group on 14 June. In July 2003, the 6th Battalion returned to Fort Eustis having driven 40,000 miles.

¹⁷ BG Thomas Robinson interview by Richard Killblane, January 22, 2005.

In June 2004, the 6th Battalion conducted the annual JLOTS operation in Honduras and Guatemala.

OIF 04-06

In September 2004, the 6th Battalion, commanded by LTC Timothy Collins (USAR), again deployed with the 7th Transportation Group to Arifjan, Kuwait for the OIF 04-06 rotation. It replaced the 766th Transportation Battalion and assumed responsibility for all HETs in theater. The 6th Transportation Battalion replaced the 766th Transportation Battalion after it moved from Truckville to Zone VI at Camp Arifjan. Zone VI was the new name for what was once Camp ARLINGTON (originally built by the 6th Battalion) after it became consolidated into one big camp. The 6th Battalion had arrived at the same camp that it had built during OIF I. The motor pool was not complete and parking space was a big problem. They had to plan the layout of the motor pool, get it graded and construct a perimeter road. They also established a maintenance facility and tire yard. Tires wore out very fast in the desert and was everyone's biggest maintenance problem. Because the HETs wore out tires fast, Collins prioritized which tires to change when each convoy rolled it.¹⁸

The HETs primary mission was to haul heavy equipment like tanks and Bradleys of the arriving units to their base camps and retrograde the redeploying units to camps in Kuwait. This intense period of deployments and redeployments usually began in December and end in April. During that time, the HETs would move 17 maneuver brigades and consequently people called that period the "Surge." The 6th Battalion inherited the 1836th HET (TX NG) and the 2123rd HET (KY NG). This was enough HETs for any missions during the lull between surges. They had been in country for seven to eight months and would remain during the upcoming surge with the 2123rd HET returning in January and the 1836th HET returning the next month. The arrival of the two replacement HET companies plus the short rotation of two active duty HET companies would give the 6th Battalion a total of six HET companies during the surge.¹⁹

The HETs had locally cut armor but the add-on armor kits were arriving. The drivers preferred the former since height offered them greater protection and the add-on armor kits completely enclosed the cabs and were hotter. If the air conditioning broke down, then the crew could not just open the widows as they had in the past. Not one HET driver was ever killed due to an IED.²⁰

Because of requirement to provide around 25 guards daily at the ammunition supply point (ASP), Soldiers on sick call and R&R, Collins could only count on 65 percent availability of drivers. Collins established the policy that no drivers could take R&R from December to April. This would increase the availability of drivers during the surge, but would required close management of the R&R schedule to ensure fair system. Collins went to his higher headquarters

¹⁸ LTC Timothy Collins interview by Richard Killblane in Kuwait, 12 March 2005 and at Fort Eustis, VA, 6 January 2006.

¹⁹ Collins interview, 12 March 2005 and 6 January 2006.

²⁰ Collins interview, 6 January 2006.

and told them, “I can either guard the ASP or drive trucks, but I can’t do both.” Group let him off the guard requirement.²¹

For convoy security, LTC Collins preferred external assets. Licensed HET drivers were in short supply and he did not want to give up two drivers for each gun truck. One of the things that the 6th Battalion inherited from the 766th Battalion was the construction of a HET gun truck. The 2123rd HET had come up with the plans and started building a HET gun truck. The inspiration of the HET gun truck came from its survivability due to its height. It had two ring-mounted .50s in the box. Upon its completion, Collins had it go out on the road twice to test it. However, the shortage of HET drivers did not make this vehicle cost effective where other vehicles and other units could do the escort mission. Besides, his boss, COL Miser, did not like the large gun trucks.²²

Upon his arrival, Collins gathered all the companies together and briefed them on COL Miser and CSM Perry’s standards. Number one was individual discipline. He believed that well disciplined convoys were attacked less. Perry had learned talking to Iraqi guards that insurgents looked for trucks that looked different as reference points. For example the observers would call ahead that a truck with a teddy bear hanging from the mirror was the center vehicle. Consequently, the Group policy stated that the trucks could have nothing hanging inside the cab. Everyone also had to properly wear their Kevlar helmet and body armor when in the cab. The heat of the summer made this unbearable and many drivers liked to take it off. Maintenance was Group’s second priority. Drivers would pull level 10 or first echelon maintenance. Third priority was training. This included weapons training and maintenance.²³

On 21 October 2004, the 7th Transportation Group received a warning order from MNCI to move the United Kingdom Black Watch Battle Group from the United Kingdom (UK) Logistic Base Shaiba, near Basrah, to LSA DOGWOOD near Iskandria. The Black Watch would establish a blocking position south of Fallujah while US forces cleared the city of insurgents during what would become known as the Battle of Fallujah. Fallujah had become the biggest trouble spot in the Sunni Triangle ever since the killing of the four Blackwater contract body guards. An estimated 3,000 to 4,000 hardcore insurgents and terrorists held up in the city of a population of 250,000 to 300,000.²⁴

On the evening of 22 October, the 7th Group received the order to pick up the Black Watch on 26 October and move them to their new location to be ready for combat operations no later than 2 November. The move was named Operation BRACKEN. BG William Johnson, Commander 143rd TRANSCOM, appointed LTC Paul L. Fish, the British Exchange Officer assigned to 7th Group, to command the ground transportation operation. This would provide an interesting twist. A British officer would command an American unit in support of a brigade-sized unit of his own army. The reason was that the British Army only had 28 HETs in theater, one third of its entire

²¹ Collins interview, 6 January 2006.

²² Collins interview, 6 January 2006.

²³ Collins interview, 12 March 2005.

²⁴ LTC Paul Fish, 7th Transportation Group (Op Bracken) 25 Oct – 4 Nov 2004.

fleet. The 6th Battalion alone had more HETs than that. Overall the 7th Group had more than 500 military HETS on task.²⁵

On 23 October, LTC Fish requested two UH60 Black Hawk helicopters to fly up to Shaiba with LTC Ross, MAJ Ernest R. Chambers, S3 of the 6th Battalion, his Operations NCO, MSG Ani Tavai, and MAJ Allen Joyner, the S3 of the 354th Battalion, and his Operations NCO, MSG Williams, to meet the British planners led by LTC Herring, Chief of Staff of UK National Support Element. They arrived at 0830 in time for a full UK cooked breakfast prior to the planning meeting, LTC Fish was delighted! He had not eaten one for a long time. The British officers were surprised to see that a British officer would be in charge of the American convoy. They discussed the upload and deployment issues. The Black Watch provided the plan for what vehicles they wanted hauled and gave the Americans a CD with the dimensions of the vehicles. LTC Fish wanted to complete the operation in one move but some of the British troops were not all ready to move in such a short time frame, so it was agreed that they had to conduct the move in two phases. The initial move would incorporate most of the UK Combat Power and essential equipment vehicles and would move by trailers from their logistics base to CEDAR then to DOGWOOD. The majority of Scottish soldiers would move to DOGWOOD by air. While Fish coordinated with the UK officers, Chambers and Tavai measured the non-US type of vehicles in the Black Watch just to be safe. They left Shaiba around 1600 hours that day.²⁶

Upon return to Arifjan, the 7th Group officers had one day to plan, coordinate with subordinate units, write and issue the deployment orders for the transportation phase of the operation. They worked through the night. 1LT Lara A. Brennecke, a 7th Group Operations Officer, looked at the photos and dimensions of the vehicles and realized that the lift requirements requested by the UK were incorrect. Using the measurements that Chambers gave her, she skillfully consolidated the detailed load manifests and requirements into a spread sheet that matched the vehicles with type of trailers required, HET or flatbed. Anything that could fit on a flatbed would go by flatbed because HETs were in big demand, as concurrent operations moving the USMC and Theatre Reserve units were ongoing. The 354th Battalion which supervised the Heavy Lift contracts was selected to provide the flatbeds, because the 106th Battalion had the priority IRAQI EXPRESS mission. On the morning of the 24th, LTC Ross met with CW2 Marcus Griffin, who ran the Asset Allocation Board, to see if the number of required vehicles were available. Griffin calculated the 6th Battalion did not have enough HETs available for the move. The problem was not the number of HETs that the 6th Battalion had but that it had far more HETs than qualified drivers. Right after that, Ross called all the S3s to take a closer look at their assets before Ross went in to the Asset Allocation Board at 1100 hours. If they had qualified drivers performing non-driving duties, they needed to make them available for this mission. Since there was still a shortage of available HETs due to the numbers on mission in Iraq, Ross made the decision that the Black Watch move would now take priority over other missions.²⁷

On 25 October, a convoy of 85 HETs from 6th Transportation Battalion, led by LT Brian Dawson, and 85 flatbeds from 354th Transportation Battalion, led by LT Williams, rolled towards the Iraqi border to spot at Shaiba. It was some hours later that LTC Fish arrived at the

²⁵ Fish, Op Bracken and Fish interview.

²⁶ Fish, Op Bracken, Fish interview and MSG Ani Tavai interview by Richard Killblane, 9 March 2006.

²⁷ Fish, Op Bracken, Fish interview and Tavai interview.

border to discover that the Kuwaiti police had stopped the transport at the border as they could not understand why so many empty vehicles were going North. After some robust discussions with LTC Fish, access was granted. At Shaiba, the Warrior APVs, 432 APVs, ISOs and Engineer equipment were loaded onto the trailers. The United Kingdom 52 Squadron, commanded by MAJ Kara, and 8 Logistic Regiment, commanded by LTC Kelly, provided support. The convoy was divided into three serials of HET and three of flatbed with approximately 30 vehicles each. In addition, the United Kingdom provided two serials of 30 wheeled vehicles each that would drive as part of the convoy serial but in their own packets.²⁸

Gun truck escort was another shortfall. There were not enough available gun trucks in the 1-178th Field Artillery or the internal assets of the 6th Battalion, so LTC Jeff Marlette's 2-147th Field Artillery based at CEDAR was also tasked for support. It was a National Guard MLRS battalion from Watertown, South Dakota that traded in its tubes for HMMWV gun trucks and was nearing the end of its tour. CPT Lucas Lentsch's Battery A had escorted its last KBR convoy on 22 October and was expecting a respite when this tasker came down. Battery A was chosen for this mission because they were between missions, experienced at convoy security and knew the area well. Lentsch became the convoy escort commander. To their surprise, when they drove over to Shaiba to join the convoy, there were reporters waiting outside the gates of the British camp. Before the day was over, pictures and videos of the move was on the internet. Operational security had been compromised and there was no secret to their move. On 27 October, the convoy pulled out and followed MSR TAMPA up to CEDAR under the cover of aviation and close air support. The 7th Group CEDAR LNO team, commanded by CPT Scott Davidson, arranged tent accommodation for the American and Scottish soldiers at CEDAR and also coordinated for priority SP times with the movement control team.²⁹

At 0130 hours on 28 October, the first convoy serial departed; followed every 30 minute by the next serial, eight serials in all extending over 250 kilometers of ground distance. Five HMMWVs of the 2-147th FA, Fish and Chamber's HMMWVs led out about an hour ahead to scout the route. Chambers took MSG Tavai with him on this trip. Normally each went out to check on operations at different times, but Chambers felt that he needed Tavai's expertise on this trip. Besides, Tavai was not an NCO to sit back and let things happen with his soldiers without becoming involved. After making the turn from JACKSON to BOSTON, the recon element halted long enough for the convoy to catch up. This was a known trouble spot and the lead element waited until they saw the lead serial of the convoy in the distance before they took off. They followed ASR BOSTON northwest through the desert along an 8-foot wide black top road interspersed at regular intervals with soft sand, water and gravel. The recon element reached the cliffs to the West of KABALA right before FOB DUKE where they again waited for about 30 minutes until they saw the lead serial off at a distance of about three miles. Reassured that the convoy was following behind them, the recon element took off.³⁰

The HMMWVs and UK SNATCH carried four additional fuel cans each since they expended fuel faster. The convoy had to halt once at a prearranged point so these smaller vehicles could

²⁸ Fish, Op Bracken, Fish interview, Tavai interview.

²⁹ Fish, Op Bracken, Tavai interview and 1LT Keith Voss, "The Black Watch Mission," *Pride of the Dakota's Dispatch*, 15 November 2004.

³⁰ Fish, Op Bracken, Tavai interview.

refuel. The lead serial was led by the CPT Lentsch's HMMWV reached the turn onto ASR MIDLAND at 1500 hours. The 20-mile route led east to DOGWOOD. They had selected MIDLAND over SAN JUAN because the latter was declared one of the most dangerous roads, next to SWORD and VERNONAs it had a history of many IEDs. MIDLAND, however, proved totally unsuitable for the civilian contract HETs and flatbeds hauling heavy loads. The route was interspersed with hard then soft sand and it became clear that no one had used that route for a long time; there were no tire tracks. Several of the commercial HETs soon became stuck in the sand after only a traveling a few miles and required recovery, a process that soon repeated itself. LTC Fish soon made the decision to download the armored vehicles off the trailers and have them self deploy the last 18 miles to FOB DOGWOOD. He directed the next two HET serials to turn onto ASR SAN JUAN and follow that blacktop east and then north to DOGWOOD. He had the last five serials of the 354th Battalion flatbeds and the UK convoy delay at FOB DUKE for the night.³¹

While traveling on ASR MIDLAND, an IED exploded between the lead and second vehicle of the recon element. A team from the 153rd EOD was already ahead of the convoy clearing the road and discovered three more IEDs on MIDLAND. They told the recon element to wait until they detonated the IEDs. After an hour wait, the convoy turned onto the last few miles of ASR SAN JUAN that continued north into DOGWOOD. However, the EOD personnel again told the convoy to halt that they could not enter DOGWOOD until they had cleared it. DOGWOOD had not been occupied since it was abandoned in May 2003 and looked it. The EOD team discovered three IEDs at the front gate, which they destroyed with controlled detonation and then a mortar was fired at the base. The convoy waited for nearly three hours then the lead serial eventually reached its destination at 1930 hours, followed by the other two HET serials. They encountered no IEDs on SAN JUAN. It appeared the bad guys knew the route and destination. The vehicles were rolled off the HET trailers that evening and the Black Watch quickly established perimeter defense. During the night mortar and small arms fire was experienced.³²

The next day, the Black Watch sent out Warriors on patrol of SAN JUAN and the 153rd EOD found several more IEDs, including a daisy chain of three 120mm mortars, which they detonated. The flatbeds pulled in to DOGWOOD from FOB Duke at 1300 hours, just as the HET serials pulled out. While Fish's scout element was heading South on SAN JUAN, they saw a Warrior vehicle being towed out of a ditch. While driving over a culvert, the Warrior vehicle caused the pipe to collapse, resulting in the Warrior rolling over into the water. Despite the best efforts of the British troops the driver drowned before he could be freed from the vehicle. This was the Black Watch first fatality of the mission. Over the next 30 days the Black Watch lost several soldiers due to vehicle borne suicide attacks.³³

As the third and last serial of HETs passed through the same village where the Warrior had flipped, a Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) exploded between a HMMWV gun truck and civilian contract HET. Three teenagers had driven the car to a culvert, parked, and ran into nearby houses. The HET took the majority of the blast, blowing out the tires of the tractor and trailer and the tractor windows causing the tractor and trailer to jack knife across the

³¹ Fish, Op Bracken, Tavai interview.

³² Fish, Op Bracken and Tavai interview.

³³ Fish, Op Bracken and Tavai interview.

road. The lead scout element was almost back onto BOSTON when they heard of the explosion over the SINGARS. They raced back to the site of the incident but by then the driver was already medevaced with minor head and arm injuries. The gun trucks pulled security around the HET. Since it was immobilized they could not tow it, however, LTC Ross back in CFLCC said they could not burn it. This was the new policy for abandoning vehicles. Experience had taught that it was harder to recover a vehicle that had been burned to the ground than one that still had its wheels to roll on. With the sun going down, LTC Fish assessed the small arms fire and RPG risk, The VBIED was well planned and occurred in an ideal ambush location; open cultivated areas on both sides of the road with a couple of hundred meters to hedge and tree lines. He therefore directed that two Black Watch Warriors push the HET vehicle off the road into the ditch and the convoy moved on. All HET serials reached FOB DUKE by 2000 hours and returned to CEDAR the next day. One HET tractor was lost due to an accident in the dust during the move, but there were no injuries.³⁴

That night DOGWOOD again came under mortar and rocket attack. The following day, the flatbeds of the 354th Battalion were escorted out of FOB DOGWOOD. They fuelled at DUKE then pushed to CEDAR, completing the move in one day.³⁵

Back at CEDAR the United Kingdom had forwarded new requirements for the second stage of the lift, which was to move the Queens Dragoon Guards (QDG) reconnaissance squadron and other engineer supplies. This required the re-tasking of 30 HETs, ten flatbeds and nine gun trucks. In addition 30 UK wheeled vehicles would deploy under their own power. The HETs and flatbeds uploaded at the Shaiba on Sunday, 31 October and pulled the next day, 1 November. The convoy arrived at CEDAR and spent the night, then departed for FOB DOGWOOD on 2 November. LTC Fish recommended that the 23 civilian commercial HETs stop and download the tracked vehicles at the junction of BOSTON and MIDLAND, as they had before, and return empty to FOB DUKE. The tracked vehicles would escort the six military HETs and ten flatbeds the remaining 20 miles to DOGWOOD. MNCI agreed with the plan. The military convoy remained over night then pulled out the next day backhauling the Warrior that went into the culvert along with other damaged items. All the vehicles linked up at DUKE then moved to CEDAR to RON and return to Kuwait on 5 November. The operation worked seamlessly.³⁶

The two replacement HET companies came from the National Guard. The advance party of the 778th HET (KS NG), led by 1LT Scott Jackson, arrived on 18 November 2004. The main body arrived on 28 November. It was only 30 percent strength when mobilized and had to borrow drivers from Kansas, Minnesota, and Guam. The 1158th HET (WI NG), commanded by CPT Jason Stebbins, arrived on 23 December. That company had picked up a platoon of drivers from Alabama to bring it up to full strength.³⁷

In November, the drivers of the 96th and 233rd HET Companies arrived for their four to five month tours to augment the HET battalion during the surge of deployments and redeployments. The other HET companies maintained their equipment during their absence. While the 96th HET

³⁴ Fish, Op Bracken and Tavai interview.

³⁵ Fish, Op Bracken.

³⁶ Fish, Op Bracken.

³⁷ "Company Wrap-up 15 Feb 2004-22 Jan 2005," 1836th Transportation Company.

was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, the 233rd HET was headquartered at Fort Knox, Kentucky, but its platoons were stationed at Forts Stewart, Benning and Knox. The only time the company came together was when it deployed to Kuwait every six months. One problem with the active duty companies was that they arrived below full strength while the Guard units borrowed from other units to bring themselves up to full strength. To make everyone identify with one unit, Collins made everyone wear the 7th Group patch and paint “7 GP” on their bumpers.

The requirement that no vehicle could cross the border without some form of armor created a challenge for the 6th Battalion. The 233rd HET fell in on trucks already with armor, but the 96th HET and the other two companies did not have any. The 1836th and 2123rd HET Companies had welded locally cut door armor on their trucks, but since they were leaving during the beginning of the surge, LTC Collins took the doors off their trucks and issued it to the 96th HET.³⁸

When all the companies were assembled by December, the 6th Battalion provided command and control for the following:

- 96th Transportation Company (HET) (Ft Hood, TX)
- 233rd Transportation Company (HET) (Ft Knox, KY)
- 778th Transportation Company (HET) (KS NG)
- 1158th Transportation Company (HET) (WS NG)
- 1836th Transportation Company (HET) (TX NG)
- 2123rd Transportation Company (HET) (KY NG)

The 1836th HET signed over about eight to ten M998 and M1025/1026 HMMWV gun trucks with a combination of add-on-armor and hillbilly armor to their replacement the 1158th HET. They were barely serviceable. The Wisconsin company was surprised to learn that it had to crew its own gun trucks. It was explained to them that the 1-178th FA did not have enough gun truck assets to provide the adequate number of gun trucks per convoy so each company had to provide at least one internal gun truck. The 1158th at first resisted the idea of using HET drivers as gun truck crews not only because HET drivers were a scarce commodity but because a HET had greater survivability than any other vehicle. By that date, no one had been killed by an IED in a HET and the drivers knew it. Each platoon asked for volunteers and formed a weapons squad with two gun trucks each specifically for convoy security. At first the internal gun truck rode behind those of the 1-178 until they learned the roads, then 1LT Kim Kleiman’s 2nd Platoon preferred to place its gun truck up front and place the 1-178 FA in the middle and rear because the HET gun truck crews knew the capabilities of the HETs and Kim trusted them not to get lost. The convoy commanders usually rode in the middle of the convoy.³⁹

The Surge!

Anticipating an insurgent attempt to disrupt the Iraq national elections, MNC-I and CFLCC would not release any units to redeploy until after the elections were over. The surge period between March to May 2005 consisted of moving equipment from 1AD, 1st ID, 1st CAV, and 3rd ID and was the largest move of forces since WWII. Additionally, in March, an unplanned move was required of allied forces due to a deteriorating tactical situation in Fallujah, Iraq. Again, 6th

³⁸ Collins interview, 6 January 2006.

³⁹ Aaron Ingram email to Richard Killblane, November 27, 2006.

Battalion was called upon to move the Allied Forces consisting of the British Black Watch Brigade in order to support the Theater Commander.⁴⁰

A 16 person Advon of 6th Transportation Battalion flew in to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and arrived at Fort Eustis on the night of 17 August 2005. The main body of HHC, 7th Transportation Group; HHD, 6th Battalion and the 119th CTC returned on Sunday, 4 September. The 7th Group had a lot to be proud of. Completing the surge on time with the caused by the delayed deployment was a great achievement in transportation management that ranked up there with the Red Ball Express of World War II. They had taken on additional tasks such as the move of the Black Watch for the Battle of Fallujah without hurting any of the other missions.

OIF 07-09

On 7 August 2008, the 6th Transportation Battalion, under the command of LTC Kevin Powers, returned to Kuwait for the third time and replaced the 10th Transportation Battalion at Zone 6 in Arifjan on 20 August with responsibility for the three HET companies, the two Landing Crafts Utility (LCU) and one Logistics Support Vessel (LSV). It was attached to the 4th Sustainment Brigade. By this time, units were no longer rotating at the same time because of the previous eight-month deployment for Guard and Reserve units and 15-month deployment for active duty units. So the 6th Battalion replaced companies about every 60 days.

To help plan the missions, the convoys have been standardized into “packages.” The 4th Sustainment Brigade inherited the “4+2” package, four HETs or M915s, two bobtails and four gun trucks. HET bobtails are transported on trailers. The 6th Transportation Battalion had 24 convoy packages. MAJ Vogel, S3, came up with the proposal for a “3+1” package reducing the convoy by one HET and one HET bobtail. This thinner convoy package is in anticipation of the increased missions during upcoming retrograde of equipment. The 6th Transportation Battalion tested this concept on convoys to Victory Base Complex (VBC) (at the Baghdad International Airport) and below in November and December.

After SSG Jesse A. Ault, driver of the lead M915, was killed by an IED in April 2008, COL Terrance Hermans, Commander of the 4th Sustainment Brigade, decided that every convoy would be led by a HET. So the “4+2” became a “1+4+2” package: one HET, four M915s plus a HET and M915 bobtail. The original package was “5+2.” They also have a plan to thin out the convoy to a “3+2” package and has been used a couple times south of Baghdad.

The 180th Transportation Battalion replaced the 6th Battalion in 2009.

Haiti Earthquake 2010

The Dive Detachment was transferred to the 30th Engineer Battalion at Fort Bragg, NC. The Dive Detachment was first responder to the earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010. They assessed the damage to the piers and stabilize the south pier as much as possible. They operated with Navy divers who received most of the publicity even though the majority of the work was done by the Army divers.

The 611th Seaport Operations Company was inactivated on 18 March 2011.

⁴⁰ “6th Battalion History, Operation Iraqi Freedom, 01 July 2004-6 September 2005,” 27 July 2005.

The 6th Transportation Battalion was inactivated on 28 August. The 359th Inland Cargo Transfer Company went to the 10th Transportation Battalion, the 558th Transportation Company went to the Special Troop Battalion, and the 89th Transportation Company (Medium Truck) was inactivated on 12 June 2012.